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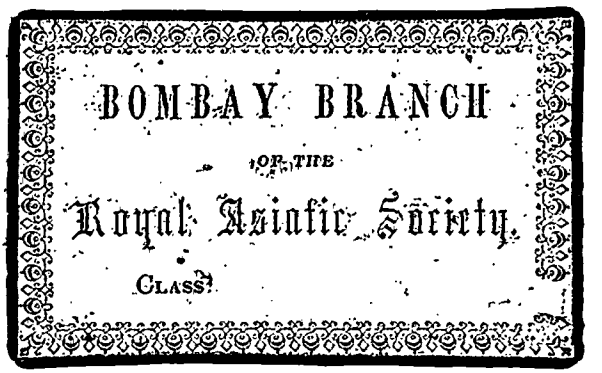

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BROWNING AND WHITMAN

A Study in Democracy

98593

BY

OSCAR L. TRIGGS

(University of Chicago)

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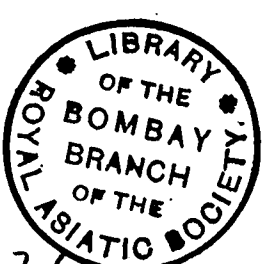

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PREFACE.

THE volume now given to the public is an expansion of a paper read before the London Browning Society at their meeting of May 27th of the present year. The purpose of the paper was to point out the essential democracy of Robert Browning. The intent of the present work is to suggest the need of an exegesis of modern prophetical literature. And the endeavour is therefore made in the case of Browning and Whitman to identify life and literature. The result will be, for a few readers, not incurious. It is found that some poems which prove well in lecture-rooms and parlours prove not at all in the open air, in the streets and workshops, in contact with the varied life of man.

The thoughts which prompt the several essays may be stated as follows: God is a living will, who is realised by men and women in their practical activities and creations. To realise the will of God, by whatever institutional means of State or church or school, is the purport of democracy. Democracy cares supremely for the soul; this, before all laws, forms, institutions, policies, economics, is the one thing worthy of conserving.

For the purposes of world-profession, art can no longer be separated from life. Art is the union of the real and the ideal, it is matter receiving spirit, it is spirit taking form. Art is a witness of ideality; at the same time it shows the possibility of the realisation of highest thought.

Art points the way to life, and stimulates the personalities to action.

Few are the poets upon whom the burden of prophecy is laid. Many are called, it would seem, but few are chosen. And what is more, the sacred few are often obscured by the rubbish of words which an idle, listless criticism has gathered about them. If we believe, with Wordsworth, in the high calling of poets, their works, one would think, are not to be considered as toys, fictions, substitutes for a cigar or a game of dominoes, but seriously, as in very league with life. The rhymers are many, giving pleasure and entertainment; they fill their day and place. The answerers are few, and demand from readers the whole of heart and brain and soul, for their words take hold on things eternal.

It is not unfair, I think, to look to the New World for exponents of democratic principles. I know not how many eyes have seen as mine, but for me, while knowing well its shortcomings, America is yet not a State to despair over, but to take hope in. America illustrates ideality and practical constructiveness. It is a "land of unprecedented faith, God's faith." Its people, it is true, are engaged in material things, but, in a hopeful spirit and with ideal promptings, they are turning them to beautiful uses, building with stones which others have rejected the institutions of freedom for the service of the soul. For their future, democracy reserves its crowning triumph, the completer evolution of individual character.

"O, America, because you build for mankind, I build for you."

At least I shall make this assumption in order to justify

the choice of American writers as exponents of democratic sentiment. I have chosen four—Emerson and Thoreau representative of the principle of individuality, Lowell and Whitman representing the principle of union. The fusion of these two principles completes the ideal of democracy. Whitman alone, when judged from the standpoint of life, stands forth with a world-wide significance, the supreme bard of the soul.

The argument which follows speaks for itself. I have only to wonder at the criticism which looks with derision upon the names in juxtaposition of Browning and Whitman. An American critic has already exclaimed, in the words of Byron: "Powers eternal, such names mingled!" The contempt in the remark is, of course—like one who, standing in the light, is not aware he is in the light—directed against Whitman. At the time of Whitman's death it was written in the New York *Independent* that "he wrote the noisest, noisomest stuff ever called poetry." "The characteristic of his style is the big and the braggart." "His poems are the long-winded replication of Emerson's egoistic pantheism." Still, I venture to affirm that the works of Whitman will take rank among the great classics of the world, as truly classic and as truly representative of American life and sentiment as are the heroic tales of Greece and Rome.

In a comparative study of poets, the endeavour should be to establish identities. A mechanical comparison of externals is generally a useless effort. But from the point of view of personality, which is the continuing element in progress, all thoughts are considered as flowerings out of the one principle. Thus viewed, all poetry has, as Whitman affirms, "more features of resemblance than differ-

ence, and becomes essentially like the planetary globe itself, compact, and orbic, and whole."

The thought tendency, of which Whitman is a part, is first clearly revealed in English literature, as a mystical element, in the works of William Blake. The same stream, grown larger by contributions of science and philosophy and ethical truth, and informed by the spirit of romanticism, emerges again in Browning. Richard Wagner is, I think, more nearly related to the movement (which is by no means national) than we are wont to suppose. Not, however, dwelling upon this aspect of Wagner's works, one may discover in him the same principle of revolt, springing from the same need of emotional expression, which resulted, in the cases of Browning and Whitman, and, indeed, of William Blake, in an extension of the province of art. Wagner best illustrates the artistic change, because he was conscious and scientific in all that he undertook.

I wish, in closing, to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Frederick J. Furnivall, whose work in the service of letters needs no praise of mine, who is better known by me as one who is ever ready to extend the hand of welcome to the stranger within the gates.

OSCAR L. TRIGGS.

LONDON, 1892.

DEDICATED

TO

MARTHA DAVIS TRIGGS

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" Rhymes and rhymers pass away, poems distill'd
from poems pass away,
The swarms of reflectors and the polite pass and leave ashes ;
Admirers, importers, obedient persons, make but the soil
of literature.
America justifies itself, give it time, no disguise can
deceive it or conceal from it, it is impassive enough,
Only toward the likes of itself will it advance to meet them.
If its poets appear, it will in due time advance to meet
them, there is no fear of mistake."

WHITMAN : *By Blue Ontario's Shore.*

" The words of true poems do not merely please,
The true poets are not followers of beauty but the
august masters of beauty."

WHITMAN : *Song of the Answerer.*

BROWNING AND WHITMAN.

I.—LITERATURE AND LIFE.

Towards Democracy is a volume of prose poems written with peculiar passionate earnestness by a student of human questions, Mr. Edward Carpenter. It is an unique book, and but few, perhaps, can read it with perfect sympathy and understanding. The author, widely read in the literature of social reform, seeks to interpret, in the light of a rare poetic insight, the movement towards democracy; a movement which is altogether the most characteristic of our time, witnessed alike in America, in England, and in the older world.

"We are all Socialists now"—how came it about? The present stress laid upon the social question—which is really a question of life upon the earth—is indicative of the wider tendency to concern ourselves with every concrete fact relating to man. By a series of inquiries respecting the supreme truths and obligations of life, we have been quickened to strive for a more reasonable social union.

Now in this discussion, it should be noted, the

poets have taken the leading part. The higher literature of this century is, broadly speaking, socialistic, in a way the eighteenth century would have thought unworthy. Even in the poetry of Keats, though he was one of the first to be touched by the modern spirit, there is hardly a single allusion to contemporary life. To use a phrase of Mrs. Browning, poets trundled back their souls five hundred years to live in an ideal past. Poetry was dissevered from life, and its pursuit was for the few a kind of opium-eating. The influence of Keats is seen in the earlier writings of Swinburne, Rossetti, and William Morris. But there arose at the beginning of the century, from various sources, an earnest protest against the scorn of the present implied by the dreamers. Mrs. Browning, in *Aurora Leigh*, spoke strongly her convictions in the matter :

> "Ay, but every age
> Appears to souls who live in't, (ask Carlyle,)
> Most unheroic. Ours, for instance, ours :
> The thinkers scout it, and the poets abound
> Who scorn to touch it with a finger-tip :
> A pewter age,—mixed metal, silver-washed ;
> An age of scum, spooned off the richer past,
> An age of mere transition, meaning nought
> Except that what succeeds must shame it quite
> If God please. That's wrong thinking, to my mind,
> And wrong thoughts make poor poems."

And mine, wrote Browning earlier in *Paracelsus*,—

> " Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
> Apart from His, like those who set themselves

To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams
Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to this narrow sphere,
But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
And all a dream! Thus was life scorned; but life
Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth! I am priest!"

While there is in literature this return to reality and life, there is on the other hand a wide and seemingly impassable gulf between life and its actual artistic expression. England, to take a case in my immediate horizon, is to-day in the midst of a widespread democratic advance. New world-forces are at work, the effect of whose action no man can measure; all things are in conflict and in revolution, the old resisting the new, the new overcoming the old. We look to art for guidance, for ideality, and for creative faculty; for it is not knowledge that is wanting, but the power to clearly conceive and externalise that which is known. But art, which was once the possession of the many, and with labour went hand in hand, has become the profession of a coterie and a class. And a vital generous sympathy, which might make the loss of popular sentiment more endurable, is one of the rarest traits of modern artistic production. Art, in short, wants the sympathetic imagination. For example, that which is most characteristic of England at the present time is its industrialism. But one would hardly gather from contemporary literature—not even from the novel, which has the field at pre-

sent, save for a few light sketches— that there lies to the north a huge, smoke-stained Black-country where lives, with beauty crushed out of their life, but not without hopes and fears and all human strivings, the greater number of England's sturdy yeomanry. In travelling throughout England I have marvelled to find a nomadic tribe of workmen called "navvies," numbering with women and children I know not how many thousands, who form a community quite apart from civilisation, having their own peculiar laws and customs and beliefs, almost a new speech. In the hopes and often passionate longings, the pleadings, the ideality of these working masses, dwells, if I have seen and heard aright, the real world-spirit, most vivid, vital, and enduring. Culture and wealth seem inclined to pessimism and to obstruct and to imprison thought and effort. From among the workmen will come the builders of Utopia and prophets of golden years. To them, with their free constructive energy, we must look for a regenerated world, and not to the conservatism of old privilege, which is helpless and bewildered in the midst of an epoch of ideas, of expansion, of essential democracy. England has educated its aristocracy to its own harm if culture remain but to neglect and obstruct. It is disastrous that the conventional fashions of culture have separated the mass of the people from the sympathies of a manly recorder. Here is, for literature, a virgin field, with inexhaustible resources of romantic and tragic event, of pathos and humour, which rightly used might bring the hearts and minds of our toiling

millions into closer harmony with the soul of social progress. (It would at least bring freshness to a literature somewhat dulled by an abundance of writings of the quality of *Lady Windermere's Fan.*) One understands why the ballads of Robin Hood and his merry men (when was England "merrie"?) lived on among the people; they stood for popular justice, for the help of the people against the exactions of the rich and noble-born. Under present conditions it seems improbable that a William Langland, or, far better still, a Robert Burns, may arise from the people themselves; such an one might be the solution of the whole matter. With the exception of Whitman in America, not a single modern English writer has made a serious and comprehensive study of contemporary life with the intent to voice the will of the people in the manly spirit of Robert Burns, who still remains the one representative British bard of democracy. Rudyard Kipling in his *Barrack Ballads* has touched once more the popular rhythm, depicting faithfully the life of the soldier, its sentiment, pathos, and fun. He has created practically a new figure in the literature of England, and these ballads of his will not be counted among the least precious of our century's poetry.

"We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't no blackguards too,
But single men in barricks, most remarkable like you."
Ballads: Tommy.

But the modern man, as he exists under these

British skies, toiling in mines and factories, tilling the soil, and trading, trading, awaits a recorder.

"Good people," said the proud preacher of Kent, "things will never be well in England so long as there be villeins and gentlefolk."

And there is another side to this matter. There is almost a total lack in criticism, of a serious study of literature from the standpoint of the people. There are prophets among us, but forerunners and interpreters are lacking. While literature has not kept pace with life, criticism has not kept pace with literature. To apply purely literary standards, suitable to the art of the eighteenth century, to that which is modern and essentially prophetical, is to discard much as unworthy and unprofitable. We are pleased to acknowledge the results of refined æsthetical criticism. Take the writings of such a man as Walter Pater, whose essays are models of artistic interpretation, and are of value by reason of their fine creative insight and accurate beautiful speech, even apart from the subject treated. The æsthetic critic, in his view, (quoting from the preface to the essays on the Renaissance,) "regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar and unique kind. This influence he feels and wishes to explain, analysing it, and reducing it to its elements." This, from the point of view of beauty, is its own justification, and all are willing to consent to its

application. But the canon of criticism which Mr. Pater has chosen, following the leading of Goethe, is "to see the object as in itself it really is." The qualities, however, which serve to conceive and set forth the elements of the beauty of the finer arts, seem often unfitted to report the ruder beauty of strenuous human prophecies of such as Whitman. "No one," warns the prophet, "gets at my verses who insists upon viewing them as a literary performance." Can not an equally sensitive mind be brought to the consideration of men who have written for other reasons than to produce pleasurable sensations, who write instead "for the fibre of things, and for inherent men and women."

"Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason,
health, rudeness of body, withdrawness,
Gaiety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are some of the
words of poems."

WHITMAN: *Song of the Open Road.*

The higher literature is destined, under our democratic advance, to come to the judgment of the people. And the people, I believe, will come to the masters of song with serious minds, asking not for entertainment, but for life,—

"What concerning life
Does this remembrancer set down."

BROWNING: *Paracelsus.*

Old formulæ will have no power to claim and bind. Their criticism will care supremely for the soul of man.

"Art can no longer be separated from life;
The old canons fail; her tutelage completed she becomes equivalent to Nature, and hangs her curtains continuous with the clouds and waterfalls;
. . . . .
The form of man emerges in all objects, baffling the old classification and definitions."

CARPENTER: *Towards Democracy.*

The first result of democratic criticism will manifestly be an emphasis of the prophetical side of literature. William Morris has recorded his experience to the effect that an audience of working-men thinks more concretely than the rich. "I have been surprised," he has said, "to find such a hearty feeling towards John Ruskin among working-class audiences: they can see the prophet in him rather than the fantastic rhetorician as more superfine audiences do."

Myself have heard Walt Whitman quoted by workmen in Victoria Park in London, passages respecting the dignity of the common man, one a thought

"Of Equality—as if it harm'd me, giving others the same chances and rights as myself—as if it were not indispensable to my own rights that others possess the same."

Eloquent Tom Mann, at the recent University Extension Conference at Oxford, with a face aglow with passion, spoke of the yearning of working-men, "not for happiness," he said, but for higher life, the life of culture, even of "sweetness and light," and among

the jewels of his speech he read as the inspiration of his life, as the end for which himself and comrades were striving in their Industrial Unions, as the creed, indeed, of social progress, the words of Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*, words which sounded strangely prophetical when read by one from the people:

> "And because men are members of one great whole, and the sympathy which is in human nature will not allow one member to be indifferent to the rest, or to have a perfect welfare independent of the rest, the expansion of our humanity to suit the idea of perfection which culture forms, must be a general expansion. Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated. The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward."

It is easy to see what side the people will take in this matter.

> "I see brains and lips closed, tympans and temples unstruck,
> Until that comes which has the quality to strike and to unclose."
>
> WHITMAN: *Autumn Rivulets.*

To seek for prophecy in poetry is a protest against the tendency to find in it mere beauty, rime, and rhythm. "Poetry," said Poe, "has no dependence,

unless incidentally, upon either duty or truth;" and Poe's own poetry, such as *Ulalume*, is the absurd reduction of this philosophy of beauty. Poetry, said Mr. Arnold in protest, is essentially "a criticism of life." And Ruskin, suiting the action to the word, passed from his defence of the pre-Raphaelites to vindicate all art; then to defend the truth of life itself in all its various manifestations, arguing that "great art is nothing else than the type of strong and noble life." A poet, Shelley would say, unites with the character of legislator that of the prophet; "his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time." In the case of the greatest artist we are, indeed, under a kind of necessity to ask what is their criticism of life; for the highest art is a more or less definite expression of the ultimate personal criticism of a great sympathising mind.

The judgment of philosophy is, of course, but partial. Art, too, has its high claims, though "art for art's sake" is a formula as vain as any other, if uncompromisingly applied. But, certainly, among those the key to whose interpretation is given by a comprehensive survey of life itself, are numbered the great artists of our century: Wagner, Ibsen, and Tolstoi in Europe; Browning, William Morris, Tennyson *(In Memoriam)*, the pre-Raphaelite school of painters in England; in America, Walt Whitman.

In the case of William Morris, art and life, the poet and socialist, meet in a remarkable relationship. Between the *Earthly Paradise* and *News from Nowhere* there seems at first sight no intimate connection. The

first is written, in exquisite melodious verse, for a summer's day to be spent idly dreaming away from the roar of the present. The latter work, a half-dream likewise, but written in pure and simple prose, grasps the concrete problems of the life of our day, and is concerned with the future and an England re-created.

"Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the deeds of his hand."

MORRIS: *Chants.*

Really the later and the earlier works interpenetrate. The poet's socialism grew out of his love of art, which inflamed him with a desire to bring all men within its domain, while the *Earthly Paradise* reveals a man who chose to live before he wrote. He invites us to

"Forget six centuries overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
And dream of London, small and white and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its garden green."

And shows us Chaucer's London that he may recover for us the conditions of life which made possible the peculiar spring-tide quality of Chaucer's poems. And before he wrote he repeated for himself the principles of living, only from which pure art can spring. The latter work announces the prophecy implied in the former.

William Morris, especially in his combined claim of art and labour, stands in the position of a prophet

to his day and future days. For plainly the coming struggle is to be waged for the freedom of industry. Having practically achieved political and religious liberty, the world is preparing for, yea, it is in the midst of, its last and most momentous war—last, because most difficult; of greatest moment, because it has to do with the emancipation of the very creative genius of men. Industrial freedom—why are we loth to agree?—can never mean freedom *from* labour, but *in* labour, just as political liberty means not freedom from law, but under law, and religious liberty means not freedom from worship, but in worship. This then is the prophecy:

> "It is right and necessary that all men should have work to do which shall be worth doing, and be of itself pleasant to do; and which should be done under such conditions as would make it neither over-wearisome nor over-anxious."—*Art and Socialism.*

It is a canon of life as simple as plain, yet upon its realisation depend the future of labour and the future of art, and it is amazing that anyone, who has at heart the welfare of literature, can be indifferent to it. However, the aristoi of literary culture, now that Morris has ceased to write rimes for their idle day, pass him by without a word. A more generous criticism in sympathy with the hopes, the passions, the needs of our time may find room for *A Dream of John Ball* and *Art and Socialism.*

Mr. Havelock Ellis,[1] in studying the new spirit as pre-

[1] The *New Spirit*, by Havelock Ellis.

sented in modern literature, worked out for himself a comparatively new method of literary criticism. He brought to his task endowments of mind rare among students of letters, for, in addition to critical abilities, he has the scientific and social imagination. With his conclusions we may differ utterly. The volume in question is interesting, for the purpose of this study, in the light of its introduction. It is one of the first attempts to review literature from the social point of view. The results are noteworthy: a new light is thrown upon the works of Heine; the chapter on Whitman was the first adequate criticism of the poet, especially in his scientific aspect; the treatment of Ibsen and Tolstoi is eminently just.

A volume following somewhat similar lines is the one in the present series on Walt Whitman, by William Clarke. A single chapter is given to the poet's art, the stress being laid upon his democracy and his spiritual creed.

A very helpful work in the interpretation of Browning is by Prof. Henry Jones, which has only reference to the poet as a teacher of philosophy. Others have discussed the science of Browning and his theology.

That such studies are possible shows that we are today confronted by new questions in art, questions social, religious, philosophic, human. Verily

"Who is a poet [or critic] needs must apprehend
Alike both speech and thoughts which prompt to speak."
BROWNING: *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country.*

II.—DEMOCRACY.

DEMOCRACY is a word both of material and spiritual significance. It is employed here in its wider inclusive sense that there may attach to it the real meaning which is contained in the somewhat conventional phrase, *We, the People.*

Liberty, whether considered in the light of religious, political, or industrial history, has final reference to the soul of man. Through religions, politics, industries, we advance in ways of practical self-realisation. The law of expression is ever from the ideal to the real. For the universe is one of thought and conscience, and the problem for the soul is the projection of its own spiritual inner freedom into the objective external world.

> "Yes! I see now—God is the Perfect Poet
> Who in creation acts his own conceptions.
> Shall man refuse to be aught less than God?"
> *Aprille*, in *Paracelsus.*

Institutions, laws, all visible forms, are therefore ever shaped anew in response to the invisible creative thought. "Freedom," Lowell says, "is re-created year by year in hearts wide open on the Godward side."

Democracy, considered as a form of government, is

a result in the order of time of the evolution of the intelligence of men and of their power of associative expression. In other words, it is the outcome, even from an institutional point of view, of the development of man's consciousness of himself. But government is but a single phase of democracy. The soul is below all.

"All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that was or is apparent upon this globe or any globe, falls into niches and corners before the procession of souls along the grand roads of the universe."

WHITMAN: *Song of the Open Road.*

"Underneath all now comes this word [Democracy] turning the edges of the other words where they meet it.

Politics, art, science, commerce, religion, customs and methods of daily life, the very outer shows and semblances, ordinary objects—

The rose in the garden, the axe hanging behind the door in the outhouse—

Their meaning must now all be absorbed and recast in this word, or else fall off like dry husks before its disclosure."

CARPENTER: *Towards Democracy.*

Properly, democracy is not a form of government at all; not a government by the one, or by the few, or by the many. It is self-government or the absolute and free control of one's self. Beneath institutions is the one human personality. The social problem is therefore twofold, the development and federation of

sovereign individuals. Federation, as an institutional government, is, however, but the working principle of self-rule. In a democracy the State and society become distinct, the State being but a mechanism, while society is the living organic unity, whose bond of union must be internal and spiritual and between individuals. Federation, in other words, is a statement in political terms of the idea of an organic society. Men are not free because they have erected a republic; but a republic follows when men become first free. Who honours the union, laws, officers he has helped to create, really honours himself and the society of which he is a part.

Democracy then, on the one hand, is the introduction in a fuller form than hitherto of personal responsibility to one's own nature. It is opportunity for the development of personality. Bonds of prejudice, conventions, whatever tends to repress, are to be taken away. It is emancipation. It is chance and room to live. It is character and essential life.

Sometimes it is asserted by those whose insight can be but superficial, that, in a democratic nation, men are reduced to a commonplace level. But monarchies do that; the German drill-sergeant does that. The equality of democracy is one of human rights and of opportunity to achieve inequality. Democracy is the sphere of struggle; it invites difference and demands strife. Why am I a Liberal?

> "Why? because all I haply can and do,
> All that I am now, all I hope to be—

Whence comes it, save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
God traced for both."

The cardinal, political doctrine which writers like Browning favour is the removal of every barrier which might check the liberty of individual development.

On the other hand, the problem of federation is in like manner solved by self-control. For when the external bonds of society cease to have meaning, unity must be won in its strongest citadel by spiritual means. Were you looking to be held together by agreements, a constitution? A constitution by itself is a dead thing. "Despotism," says De Tocqueville, "may govern without Faith, but liberty cannot." Spiritual relationship, consciously existing between man and man is the one and only thing which makes for unity.

"These shall tie you and band you stronger than hoops of iron,
I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love of lovers tie you."

WHITMAN: *Calamus.*

The purpose of democracy is, as Whitman states,—

"To illustrate the doctrine that man, properly trained in sanest, highest freedom, may and must become a law and series of laws unto himself, surrounding and providing for not only his own personal control, but all his relations to other individuals and to the State.

Democratic Vistas.

The truest government begins and ends with the individual.

Carlyle, we know, defined liberty in other terms:

> "Liberty? The true liberty of a man, you would say, consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out, the right path, and to walk thereon. . . . If thou do know better than I what is good and right, I conjure thee, in the name of God, force me to do it; were it by never such brass collars, whips, and hand-cuffs, leave me not to walk over precipices!"

Democracy, he said, meant despair of finding heroes to govern us. But such is the liberty of the Saturnians; the definition of democracy is insulting to a man. Since, however, Carlyle's dictum is regarded by many as the last word upon the subject, it will be well to understand what is the basis for such reasoning.

We yield all due reverence to Carlyle. His influence has been creative and inspiring. To be imbued with his teaching is to have a nobler view of human life. He has stood for the spiritual side of the universe:

> "The Invisible world is near us, or rather it is here, in us and about us; were the fleshly coil removed from our soul, the glories of the Unseen were even now around us, as the ancients fabled of the spheral music."

Carlyle believed in the spiritual world, in the unity of nature, in the organic compact of society, the brotherhood of man. To him as to no other we owe conceptions of private and social duty. Thus far he is at one with the foremost democrats, among whom I

number Browning and Whitman, representing with them the passage from an old creed to a new faith. But, while believing in God, he was an infidel as to man; here he is at variance.

In former philosophies man and God had fallen asunder. For the Puritan there was no place for man. In the philosophy of the corrupt court of Charles the Second, there was no room for God. The reconciliation came in the guise of an idealistic philosophy, beginning with German Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, who revealed the universal element in the life of man and gave new dignity to the individual by reason of his relations to the universal.

The movement was of immense significance both to art and to life, and its effects will continue to be felt for many generations. On the side of life the movement was both individualistic and socialistic. The individual was seen to be neither the master nor the slave of the universe, but destined to live in perfect freedom under social law. The individual derived his life from the race, and the race in turn lived in the individual. Each is possible only through the other; neither is complete without the other. Society was thus seen to be an organism deriving its health from that of each member in the system. Each member again cannot live solely unto himself, but finds his highest realisation in the life of the race.

Carlyle was among the first to bring into England the poetic idealism of German philosophy and literature. He had worked his way through the despair which followed upon the disruption of the old system,

and stood for the organic unity of society. And he saw, with his clear insight, the tremendous responsibility thrown upon men. We are all bound together. We rise or fall together. "It is a mathematical fact," Carlyle said, "that the casting of this pebble from my hand alters the centre of gravity of the universe." If the spiritual life of one be lessened, the life of all is affected. Either we elevate the race—it is a struggle of life or death—or be degraded with the lowest. The present social duty of each is to share with the weakest the wealth, the culture, the opportunity, the civilisation which we have inherited or acquired. We are what we are by virtue of the humanity within us, however poor, weak, perverted that may be. There was no doubt in Carlyle's mind but that each was his brother's keeper. And his intense realisation of this fact became the reason for his despair: "Ye are my brethren, hence my rage and sorrow." For the duty laid upon men was greater than they could bear. He saw them as fools walking. The people were but shooting the "Niagara" of social disaster. Seeing clearly his own duty, he strove alone, like Elijah, unmindful of the seven thousand men who had not bowed down to Baal. Like Julian, in Ibsen's drama, he felt the godhead in himself, and, like him, was to be vanquished by the Galilean who could see the godhead in others.

Carlyle's special mission in England was to declare the whole duty of man. But consider his conception of duty. Duty was a necessity imposed on man by an external infinite power. The law was given as on

stone tablets, with an awful "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not." Man was a soldier, alien to the field and cause. Obedience was the only virtue. He who gave the law and command was far removed in the heavens, an eternal Judge. God was manifest to man; thus far the reconciliation had been wrought. Man, therefore, was spirit. But within man there was nothing to correspond to the divinity without. He was a wanderer, a blind giant, capable of spiritual yearnings, but incapable of receiving satisfaction. An infinite burden was laid upon a finite being, and Carlyle, having never gained the standpoint of Browning, that

> "The truth in God's breast
> Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed,"

could only cry out, in the words of Caponsacchi,—

> "O great, just, good God! Miserable me!"

But whence, Carlyle, came the sorrow and the condemnation? Pessimism itself is a witness of the presence of ideality. The very cry is proof of the power to rise, and a promise of man's worth and dignity. The eye can see but what the heart prompts. To know the need of reform, to have aspirations and faiths, is far on the road to attainment. For man is the

> "Facet and reflection of God."

On the one hand, Carlyle never fully conceived the idea of the solidarity of human life. His error is well illustrated by his attitude towards the American Civil

War. He had not realised the power of social forces, working for the correction of evil, by the action and reaction of individuals in a social union :

"How society waits unform'd, and is for a while between
things ended and things begun."
WHITMAN : *Songs of Parting.*

And, on the other hand, he ignored the only solution which can be had. Liberty is obedience, it is true, but to that law which has its seat in the human conscience. Liberty has value only as the threshold of a willing service. Only by transference of the outer law to the inner motive can duty become at all imperative.

"Into another state, under new rule
I knew myself was passing swift and sure. . . .
Sirs, I obeyed. Obedience was too strange, to dare
disobey
The first authoritative word. 'Twas God's."
CAPONSACCHI, in *Ring and the Book.*

Carlyle, failing in the complete synthesis, ended in despair and pessimism. The complete reconciliation has been made by Browning and Whitman, who identify the inner and outer law, who find

"All's love, yet all's law."

"The whole universe," argues Whitman, "is absolute Law. Freedom only opens entire activity and license under the law. . . . We escape by a paradox

into free will. We only attain to freedom by a knowledge of and implicit obedience to Law. Great is the Will—the free Soul of man. Only obeying the laws can attain freedom. The highest law is the Law of Liberty—the fusion and combination of the conscious will, with the universal eternal unconscious ones which run through all Time, pervade history, prove immortality, give moral purpose to the entire objective world, and the last dignity to human life."

"For him I sing.
I raise the present on the past,
(As some perennial tree out of its roots, the present on the past,)
With time and space I him dilate and fuse the immortal laws,
To make himself by them the law unto himself."

WHITMAN: *Inscriptions.*

Finally, the end and purpose of democracy is declared by Paracelsus.

"Progress is
The law of life, man is not man as yet.
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy."

BROWNING: *Paracelsus.*

III.—DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA.

We must look, I think, to the United States of America for the most consistent spiritual and structural expression of democratic ideas. That the United States has a peculiar significance in history the whole course of world-events goes to show. We believe the American system of government to be a product of historical evolution, that its structure was the purport of all the past, that its completion is the aim of the future.

"Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,
I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and ideal,
Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America, heir of the past so grand,
To build a grander future."

WHITMAN: *Song of the Open Road.*

"A newer garden of Creation, no primal solitude—
Densé, joyous, modern, populous millions, cities and farms,
With iron interlaced, composite, tied, many in one,
By all the world contributed—Freedom's and Law's and Thrift's society,
The crown and teeming paradise, so far, of Time's,
To justify the past."

WHITMAN: *Autumn Rivulets.*

Federal union is the last and highest attainment of historical progress, last in the order of time, and highest, since requiring in the sovereignties comprising it the highest degree of political morality and of social ideality. Previous to the United States there existed but three examples of federated peoples, the ancient Achæan League, the Swiss Republic, and the United Netherlands, none of which served as a complete guide to Hamilton and his coadjutors in their task as architects of the Union. The problem before them was the completer fusion of sovereignties.[1] They were to compromise two equally sacred rights, that of the one and of the many.

The unit of the American society is the individual. The right of self-government was the new principle entering into the constitution of nations with the spread of Christianity. The pre-Christian league had little or nothing analagous to the Christian State. Wherever the Protestant and Puritan pilgrim has gone he has affirmed, in political terms, the ideal truth of Christianity, the self-sovereignty of man. The American State starts with the individual as a political unit, acknowledges his right to self-rule, groups him for purposes of mutual helpfulness in ever wider constituencies, in the ascending series of town, county, State, and nation, each with delegated powers from the central source, "We, the People." In spite of the corruptions which have gathered round it, the practical basis of the

[1] A problem not solved by Switzerland until the model constitution of 1874. Previous to this, Swiss democracy had been much allied with the spirit of feudal times.

American nation is the individual conscience. That which was external has become internal. And it is at this point that European misjudgment arises. "Burn your books," warned De Tocqueville, for democracy requires new standpoints. The American compact is altogether with individuals. Did you think that the States are bound together by a constitution? Did you think that the source of supreme authority or law resided at Washington, or in the legislatures of any one of the States? Did you think that the noisy brood of orators and professional politicians and wire-pullers constituted the government of the States? But

> "I see this day the People beginning their landmarks;
> Never was average man, his soul, more energetic, more like a God."
>
> WHITMAN: *Songs of Parting.*

Beneath every external lies concealed, but alert and ever secure, the great national will, the source of all activity, the animus of all liberty. Mr. Bryce well warns the readers of the *American Commonwealth* to adjust their judgments in harmony with this hidden fact: "What he [the European] probably fails to do is to realise the existence in the American people of a reserve force and patriotism more than sufficient to sweep away all the evils which are now tolerated, and to make the politics of the country worthy of its material grandeur and of the private virtues of its inhabitants. America excites an admiration which must be felt upon the spot to be understood." "Greatness," agrees Matthew Arnold, "is a spiritual condition

worthy to excite love, interest, and admiration." The real point at issue is then the people themselves.

"A great city is that which has the greatest men and women;
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world."

WHITMAN: *Song of the Open Road.*

Among the people democratic justification is to be found. Statistics of corn and cotton, iron and gold, transactions in real estate, numbers of population, tables of values and wages—these in no way indicate the true wealth of a country. Formation of character —I am repeating no child's homily, but truest economic doctrine — is of real concern. Now character is not reported in newspapers, it is not translatable for foreign readers in books, it is hidden in homes and daily affairs, is seen in the face and manner, and must be gathered, as Mr. Bryce suggests, upon the spot. That America has greatness of character is not for me to affirm, but it will be well if we understand that in its character its greatness is to be found. That the tendency of democracy is to reduce men to levels and commonplaces I feel free to deny. Monarchy builds a pyramid of rank, but levels character; democracy levels rank, but builds a pyramid of character. In the gallery of portraits of great men at Versailles, the most striking face—another bears witness—is that of Daniel Webster. In any gallery of monarchs, statesmen, orators, the face of Lincoln would attract attention for its strength, its faith, its wisdom, its simplicity. A very common face, re-

sulting no doubt from the fusion in America of the races from the land of the vine and the land of snows, is one marked by ideality and practical constructive energy; it is common, but not commonplace.

Matthew Arnold once said that America had solved the political and social problems, but not the human problem. What is the human problem? Does art or beauty solve the human problem? Wagner, in answer, wrote to his friend, "I cannot help thinking that if we had real life we should need no art. Art begins just there where real life ends,—when there is nothing more before us; then we cry out to art, 'I wish!' I cannot conceive how a truly happy man can ever think of art." Who can doubt that Wagner tells the secret of much of old world culture? For art is often the witness of the soul's yearning to escape from its prison house. If the western world has not highest art, it may yet have highest life.

"Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance
and form that it might be painted in a picture?"
WHITMAN: *A Song for Occupations.*

"Mightier than Egypt's tombs,
Fairer than Grecia's, Roma's temples,
Prouder than Milan's statued, spired cathedral,
More picturesque than Rhenish castle-keep,
We plan even now to raise, beyond them all
Thy great cathedral sacred industry, no tomb,
A keep for life for practical invention."
WHITMAN: *Song of the Exposition.*

The problem for America is the development of a grander, larger, more generous humanity combined

vital democratic forms. The elements of new-world sentiment, as analysed for the students of Ann Arbor by Ex-President Cleveland, are these:

> "A reverent belief in God, a sincere recognition of the value and power of moral principle and those qualities of heart which make a noble manhood, devotion to unreserved patriotism, love for man's equality, unquestionable truth in popular rule, the exaction of civic virtue and honesty, faith in the saving quality of universal education, protection of a free and unperverted expression of the popular will, and an insistence upon a strict accountability of public officers as servants of the people."

The common charge brought against the western civilisation is that it is materialistic. If it be largely true, the days of democracy (which is the rule of spirit) are numbered. But the charge is falsified by the witness of the presence of an equal and surpassing spirituality which moulds the material to its own ends.

Since the discovery of the New World until now, the people have been engaged in the struggle with Nature for a home. But the necessities of a materialistic strife unceasing have developed in the human participant an energy, a persistency, a practical ingenuity, a power of moulding matter to finer ends, of turning rudeness to beautiful uses—in short, of spiritualising material things, to a degree unparalleled in the history of the past. Does the clay mould the potter? Does the hand which fashions a thought in marble partake of the nature of matter or of mind? The

astonishing uplift of the stone spire on the cathedral at Salisbury, which seems to crown the victory of the human spirit, is really not more indicative of the conquest of matter by the spirit of man than are the engines and instruments of commerce and industry, or even the presence of a human home and garden in the midst of what was once a waste.[1]

If I were called upon to search among poetic creations for an illustration of this aspect of American civilisation, I should enter not the dreamland of Keats, not the freedom-land of Shelley, but the real-ideal-land of Browning, and should name as the latter poet's crowning work, *The Ring and the Book*, whose few crude facts are permeated by the poet-thought and made to live again, showing forth the beauty of life and the meaning of life in forms of completest art.

It is such a materialism and such a spirituality that is illustrated by the present day.

On the side of the past, American history is replete with incidents of spiritual significance. The continent was discovered by faith and settled in hope. Two wars have been waged, neither of them for material gain; one for independence and one for union, ideas only yet furiously fought for.

The tendency of the present is to build better in view of the future. Critics like Renan, who contrast

[1] The beautiful winged electric car which passes my door in Minneapolis like a thing bewitched, is a perpetual protest against materialistic ideas and the crowning witness to a people's ideal thought.

the art and the historic past of an Italian city with the apparent commercialism of a work-a-day modern world, forget that America is taking form according to an ideal future whose vistas open endlessly. Italy has a glorious past; its work is done. America has a glorious future; it seeks a perfection not yet realised, a completeness which only the future can contain. The unperformed advances—

"Shadowy vast shapes smile through the air and sky."

Now materialism may take many forms: in art it may be manifested in uncreative conventionality; in religion as a worship of idols and service of outward forms; in the State as a trust in the machinery of government to accomplish what only a people's active will can do; in education as an emphasis of the facts of knowledge as contrasted with the spirit of wisdom. In society at large materialism may be shown in a blind faith in creed or organisation, in observance of ceremonies from which the spirit has departed, in obstruction to reform, in actual inability to change, in dullness to beauty or truth, in general Philistinism, even in a worship of the past, even in an idolatry of freedom—in any idolatry of means as ends. In all these ways it may be that American society is less materialised than that of Europe. America is less conventional and more volatile. This characteristic has often been commented upon, but it is seldom noted that the ability to change springs from a desire for improvement. Nothing is held to be so complete that it cannot be made better. The past is

great, but the future is great also; the face is forward, not backward. Institutions either of government, or of religion, or of education, easily take new forms. Experiments are readily set in operation without the obstruction of conservative pessimism. Method succeeds to method. Execution is equal to ideality. It is the spirit of man informing the material, creating fluid structures in which it may remain for the moment, emerging again when the form ceases to give shelter. It takes soul to move mass. America has, I believe, one great and abiding passion,—to make the reason, the soul of man, and the will of God to prevail. Such a statement is perhaps not subject to proof, but is arrived at by a discerning spirit.

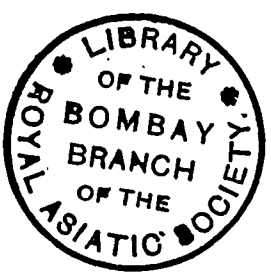
"Of these years I sing,
How they pass and have pass'd through convuls'd pains, as through parturitions,
How America illustrates birth, muscular youth, the promise, the sure fulfilment, the absolute success, despite of people—illustrates evil as well as good,
The vehement struggle so fierce for unity in one's self;
How many hold despairingly yet to the models departed, caste, myths, obedience, compulsion, and to infidelity;
How few see the arrived models, the athletes, the Western States, or see freedom or spirituality, or hold any faith in results."

WHITMAN: *Songs of Parting.*

Have you marked the dominant, ever dominant note of hope of American speakers and writers? Have

you read the message of Whitman in its entirety? At this moment the people are confronted by as momentous a question as has come to any nation, a question which is resolving itself into one of industrial war. But light-hearted, nothing daunted

" We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers ! O pioneers !"



IV.—DEMOCRATIC TYPES.

THERE have been two great crises of democracy in the New World, the war for independence and the war for union. The first event was fought for separation and individual life. Of this principle Emerson and Thoreau became the literary exponents. Emerson is, at once, the truest and sweetest voice of the Puritanism which founded the nation and declared for its independence. He was the first emancipator. In his quiet, sober way he annulled the whole of tradition. He was, in an especial manner, the guardian of thought. In 1832, when the slavery agitation was at its height, he wrote in his journal: "I have quite other slaves to free than those negroes—to wit, imprisoned thoughts, far back in the brain of man—far retired in the heaven of invention, and which, important to the republic of man, have no watchman, or lover, or defender, but I." And probably his expansive influence has been chiefly felt by scholars. His oration on *The American Scholar*, delivered in 1837, was called by Holmes, The Intellectual Declaration of Independence, and Lowell says to the same effect: "The Puritan revolt had made us ecclesiastically, and the Revolution politically, independent, but we were still socially and intellectually moored to English thought till Emerson cut the cable and gave

us a chance at the dangers and the glories of blue water." While a mystic, and teaching the principle of spiritual union, yet Emerson's chief stress lay upon the individual. He was, primarily, a lover of ideas, and was wanting in wide popular sympathies.

Thoreau was similarly an uncompromising individualist. It was on July 4th, the American Day of Independence, that he took up his residence in his self-constituted Arcadia in Walden Woods. All his social doctrines lead finally to this end, that the individual must be given complete freedom for the development of character along the lines of natural qualities. Failure to follow the ideal was for him unpardonable sin.

> "Only so far as individual progress takes place will the real progress of the race follow, and those persons contribute most to this real progress who, stepping aside from the ordinary routine, give us by their lives and thoughts a new sense of the reality of what is best of the ideal towards which all civilisation must aim."
>
> *Journal.*

The socialism of men seemed "their most contemptible and discouraging aspect." "In this matter of reforming the world we have little faith in corporations." With the social conditions then present, Thoreau was unquestionably right. The time was not ripe for the realisation of The People. Collective action, such as the Brook Farm experiment, could but end in failure. "As for these communities," said Thoreau, "I think I had rather keep bachelor's hall

in hell than go to board in heaven." The first stress of the transcendental philosophy was thus upon the individual—What does the world mean to me? And to the individual both Emerson and Thoreau preached the worth of simplicity and sincerity.

The Civil War was a note of unity; it was not merely a war, it was a revolution.

"Thunder on! Strike on, Democracy! Strike with vengeful stroke;
And do you rise higher than ever yet, O days, O cities!"

Never have the results of a war so justified war. The States, moving *en masse* of their own choice and fighting for their own idea, understood for the first time the meaning of the people. The war resulted in national fusion and in the creation of a distinctively American and democratic spirit, which shall last "for thrice a thousand years." The people gained a spiritual sense, gained character, solidarity, winning also emotions, learning to call men brothers. Never has reconciliation—"word over all, beautiful as the sky"—followed so closely on strife. The last event of the war, the forgiveness of the armies, was one of the sublimest acts in history. Emerging from civil strife, tried so as by fire, the United States entered upon their full democratic career.

Lincoln, proved by that struggle, is revered as the very embodiment of the democratic faith.

"The sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands."
WHITMAN: *Burial Hymn.*

" The kindly, earnest, brave foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American."
LOWELL : *Commemoration Ode.*

Happily, Lincoln's name is enshrined in the two noblest of songs, which are the chief thing the New World has done thus far in poetical creation, Lowell's *Commemoration Ode*, and Whitman's *Burial Hymn.* Lowell and Whitman sound the new note of brotherhood and love.

Lowell, especially the younger Lowell of the *Vision of Sir Launfal* and author of the *Biglow Papers*, is pre-eminently the voice of the Christian democracy, one like his own Prometheus—

"A great voice
Heard in the breathless pauses of the fight
By truth and freedom ever waged with wrong,
Clear as a silver trumpet, to awake
Far echoes that from age to age live on
In kindred spirits."

As deeply Puritan as Emerson, with as deep a faith in the sacred nature of the individual, Lowell is more democratic in the proclamation of the brotherhood of man, more Christ-like in his sympathies for every weak and outcast one. The Christ-nature has never been interpreted by poetic insight in truer terms of human life. One gains from Lowell the sense of that essential Christianity which is the foundation of moral America, which manifests itself in emphasis alike of the sanctity of the individual as a being of action and

thought, and of the social principle of sonship which makes for social union. Lowell with his spiritual visions is the national seer. It is from no lack of appreciation that another is chosen in this study to speak in his stead. Lowell is secure of a crown of flowers perennially.

The world is slow in accepting the significance of Whitman. Recognition has come more frankly—by a strange irony—from England than from his own well-loved land. Now that his message is finished, we may make a more just estimate than hitherto. I will state my own faith freely. When first I heard him speak—"Camerado" was the word he used—

> "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken."

I believe that his writings complete are the most notable utterance in the literature of America.

In his own person and poems Whitman is the completest embodiment of the democratic sentiment that the Christian world has produced.[1] A greater, all-

[1] But compare Sidney Lanier, *The English Novel*, page 45: "The truth is, that if closely examined, Whitman, instead of being a true democrat, is simply the most incorrigible of aristocrats masquing in a peasant's costume." Page 60: "I complain of Whitman's democracy that it has no provision for sick, or small, or puny, or plain-featured, or hump-backed, or any deformed people, and that his democracy is really the worst kind of aristocracy, being an aristocracy of nature's favourites in the matter of muscle." Yet says Whitman, "I bestow upon

comprehending, all-sympathising soul has not lived upon the earth—you who like him not, have you learned his lesson complete? Thoreau saw something almost supernatural about the man. As a guide and inspirer to men he has indeed been placed by the side of Jesus of Nazareth. In the book in which the tribute is paid, *Towards Democracy*, the comparison does not seem irreverent. But it is sufficient to say that his message is the expression of his deepest passion, and that passion is, beyond cavil, the choicest fruit of the Western World thus far.[1]

" I heard that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle the New World,
And to define America, her athletic democracy,
Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in them what you wanted."

WHITMAN: *Inscriptions.*

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any man or woman the entrance to all the gifts of the universe," and his invitation extends to every man and woman, poor, or weak, or heavy-laden. The ideal, the perfection of life, is a sound mind in a sound body. " I show that size is only development." Would Mr. Lanier present deformity as an end to be striven for?

[1] Whittier is a sweet name truly, and together with Bryant and Longfellow and Hawthorne, is as characteristic of a phase of American life as are Lowell and Whitman. Whittier is the soul of moral New England (whence pilgrims came for conscience' sake). Lowell is of national, Whitman of world-wide significance.

V.—WHITMAN.

WHITMAN'S significance is chiefly prophetical. He has seen more clearly than others the necessity of ideals to direct the building of America, and he has gone far on before singing constructively the idea of democracy; in conclusion, he announces what comes after him. But he is by no means unrelated to the past. In his poems are embodied the distinctively human and therefore primal experiences of the race. There is in English one body of writings with whose form and spirit *Leaves of Grass* quite directly coheres, the works of William Blake, the passionate poet of freedom.

" Let the slave grinding at the mill run out into the field,
Let him look up into the heavens and laugh in the bright air,
Let the enshrined soul shut up in darkness and in sighing,
Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years,
Rise and look out! his chains are loose! his dungeon doors are open."

BLAKE: *Prophecy on America.*

Mr. Swinburne, in his *Essay on Blake*, remarks that there are so many points of contact between the two

poets as to afford some ground of reason to those who preach the transition of souls or transfusion of spirits.

> "To each, all sides and shapes of life are alike acceptable or endurable. From the fresh, free ground of either workman nothing is excluded that is not exclusive. The words of either strike deep, and run wide and soar high. They are both full of faith and passion. . . . Both are spiritual, and both democratic; both by their works recall . . . the fragments vouchsafed to us of the Pantheistic poetry of the East. Their casual audacities of expression or speculation are in effect well nigh identical. Their outlooks and theories are evidently the same on all points of intellectual and social life."
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> *Essay on Blake*, p. 301.

These words were written in 1866, and have never been fully gainsaid. They are chiefly true with reference to the poets' mystical creed. Blake was one of the first disciples of that principle of mysticism, of the essential unity of the universe, which became later the inspiration of Emerson, Browning, and Whitman. Blake sought in his best work to marry the reason, the spirit, the soul, which he called heaven, and the energy, the material, the body, which he called hell. And Whitman announces a similar purpose in *Song of Myself*:

> "The pleasures of heaven are with me, and the pains of hell are with me,
> The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into a new tongue."

Blake, it is true, was not quite sane—how could he be? A spirit once more with faiths and vision, baffled, shut up in the prison-house of an unsympathetic age. Whitman is always sane, though there are not lacking those who would class him also among the egotists of insane genius![1] He touches life with a wider range of thoughts and sympathies than was possible for Blake. His poems, in short, are wrought in direct response to his own century, a product of the world's evolution, and follow, with Browning's, in literary order as naturally as the Scriptural succession: "Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren."

The primary and determining quality of Whitman's nature is emotional and religious. His thoughts tend naturally to rapturous utterance. Everything is regarded with wonder, with reverence, and with love. Creeds and schools are held in abeyance. In the dispute about God he is silent. Still his prayer is that of Columbus upon the sands:

"My hands, my limbs grow nerveless,
My brain feels rack'd, bewilder'd,
Let the old timbers part; I will not part,
I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves
buffet me,
Thee, Thee at least I know."

He is pantheistic in sentiment in that he beholds

[1] See H. H. Ellis' translation of Prof. Lombroso's work on *The Man of Genius.*

God in every object, the Eternal Presence perfecting the world; but he holds such belief without reference to the Eastern philosophy, for he still leaves room for the moral life and freedom of the individual who has his part also to perform. It is the pantheism of Browning given statement in *Christmas Eve*:

> "God's all, man's nought:
> But also, God, whose pleasure brought
> Man into being, stands away,
> As it were, a hand-breadth off, to give
> Room for the newly-made to live,
> And look at Him from a place apart,
> And use his gifts of brain and heart,
> Given, indeed, but to keep forever."

That he is an apostle of Christ none will dispute. Thoreau wrote in 1856 of *Leaves of Grass* that not all the sermons that had been preached in the land were equal to it for preaching. Nearest to Paul, the poet enthrones love above every other form of truth or virtue.

In philosophy Whitman is an idealist, having frankly adopted Idealism for the uses of democracy to justify it. He wonders how the system could have arisen in Germany, when only America has room for its application.

> "And thou, America,
> For the scheme's culmination, its thought and reality,
> For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived."
>
> *Song of the Universal.*

Idealism was a search for the universal man; it brought unity into a divided universe, identifying the world of matter and spirit, the individual and society. Democracy rests upon the answer to the question of the relation of man to the universe. From the newly gained point of view, Whitman, thinking of the question, reconstructed the ideas of personality and love, of the self and democracy. From his philosophy springs his splendid optimism, his creed of an harmonious world, his intent "to compact you ye parted, diverse lives," his thought of man "justified, blended with God":

"For it [the soul] the mystic evolution,
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also justified." *Song of the Universal.*

The conclusions of science, he averred in his preface of 1876, interiorly tinged the chyle of all his verse for purposes beyond. The scientific basis of *Leaves of Grass* is one of great significance. Whitman, more than any other of the transcendentalists, had thrown himself into the new current of scientific and realistic thought, which, while without nationality, may, at that time, under the influence of Darwin, be called English. Science, by its laws of evolution, conservation of energy, and other processes which prove the unity of Nature, came to the help of his philosophy

"To put rapport the mountains and rocks and streams,
And the winds of the north, and the forests of oak and pine,
With you, O soul." *Songs of Parting.*

Also to science is due his sense of the infinite expanse of the universe. Whitman's imagination outruns even Milton's in conception of vastness and splendour, and in the midst of limitless space and limitless time he dared to set man consonant, and greater than Nature. Evolution, interpreted by a philosophic mind, brought an escape from the sense of necessity which had oppressed man from the beginning.

"This, then, is life,
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and convulsions."

Starting from Paumanok.

"All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul."

Song of Myself.

And there is still progression; his soul cannot rest—

"Forever alive, forever forward."

Whitman's realistic method, his bold facing of the facts of life—"I accept Reality, and dare not question it"—is derived from that modern spirit which is peculiarly scientific, consisting, as stated by Mr. Huxley, in "veracity of thought and action, and the resolute facing of the world as it is." As a representative of the new spirit, Mr. Havelock Ellis identifies him with a contemporary in a far different land, Henrik Ibsen.

Like the scientists, Whitman deals with types and averages. Like them, he has a certain reverence for all matter and their sense of the sweet purity of organic life. There is often in his poems a happy touch of scientific description, such as in the *Leaf of Faces:*

"The face of the singing of music—the grand faces of natural lawyers and judges, broad at the back-top;
The faces of hunters and fishers, bulged at the brows—the shav'd, blanch'd faces of orthodox citizens;
The pure, extravagant, yearning, questioning artist's face."

But Whitman is, in no proper sense, a scientist.

"Gentlemen, to you the first honours always!
Your facts are useful and real—and yet they are not my dwelling;
I but enter by them to an *area of my dwelling.*"

Song of Myself.

"When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till, rising and gliding out, I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time
Looked up in perfect silence at the stars."

By the Roadside.

In truth, avoiding the dead—since merely intellectual and temporal—statements of science, Whitman repeats them significantly in terms of feeling, which alone are eternal. In other words, with a poetic vision equal to the range of science, he relates the laws of Nature, by means of the emotional, to the common life of man, assigning all their poetic place in the united universe.

As an artist, Whitman is the legitimate successor in America of the romanticism which has inspired, if not directly fashioned, every great artistic creation in Europe since the work of its inaugurator, Victor Hugo. The purpose of the romantic movement, which is itself but a phase of the general progress of the race towards liberty, was to free the personality from the thrall of classical formalism. This was a real bondage, and needed to be broken that the true Greek spirit might be gained. Whitman is the last of the romanticists, and one of the first fruits of the antique spirit renewed. He has yearned to make somehow vocal the aspirations, the promise, the affections of his own people, to make somehow real the sense of "sweet-air'd interminable plateaus" (beautiful as dreams, which tally in land the grandeur of the skies and the ocean), to convey in song something of the movement of free-flowing rivers, and of the mystery of the pine forests, and of the enthusiasm and hopefulness of the perfect air and sunshine of his own land; in short, he has purposed to interpret the life of the Modern Man in his own immediate days.

"The conceits of the poets of other lands I'd bring thee not,
Nor the compliments that have served their turn so long,
Nor rhyme, nor the classics, nor perfume of foreign court or indoor library;
But an odour I'd bring as from forests of pine in Maine, or breath of an Illinois prairie."

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

And this is Hellenism. For it is not by invocations to the Muses, or by allusions to Helicon's sacred spring or Parnassus' holy heights; it is not by the learning of a Johnson or a Milton, or by the fine dream-lore of a Keats, that we win the spirit of the Greek. The virtue of Greek art is its acceptance of the environing nature. The ideal which Phidias sculptured is that of a people filled with the joyful sense of their own violet-tinted hills. The Parthenon sprang out of the hill of the Acropolis, pediment and column merging gradually along the natural lines of the rocks, and issuing in the finer human beauty of capital and frieze. Burns is more Greek than Keats, Lowell than Pope, Millet than Leighton, Whitman than either. The grey English cathedrals which harmonise so well with the shadowy skies of the north, and which rose into upper air out of the "interior sphere" of a people's thought and aspiration and love; the pretty country churches which have taken form from generation to generation under the hands of the villagers themselves; even the old homesteads which fit so harmoniously into the nooks of the hills, or by the edges of the woods, or along the banks of the streams—these are more truly indicative

of the classic spirit than the cumbrous, ornate churches and mansions of the "Renaissance" style of the dull eighteenth century—which was neither Greek nor modern.

"Phœbus' chariot-course is run:
Look up poets to the sun!
Pan, Pan is dead."

In this aspect of his art there is hardly another poet with Whitman to compare. He is best understood by reference to the old Dutch[1] painters of the seventeenth century, who exhibited men in their natural environment, and more especially to Jean-Francois Millet, a later exponent of similar principles in the plain of Barbizon. Millet, removed from the direct influence of romanticism, was one of the first to apply classical principles to the delineation of the modern man. Of about the same age as Whitman, he resembled him even in appearance. An account was given of him by James Parton in 1889 (in the *New York Ledger*): "Millet was tall and of a powerful build, his head large, and his hair thick and bushy, flowing back from his face in a manner a little wild. His face was handsome, with excellent features, and large, gentle eyes. . . . His studio nickname was 'The Man of the Woods.' . . . His pictures were often bold and expressive, but the method of treatment was unusual, and the execution apt to be rough. Most of the students regarded him as a queer fellow with talent, but too eccentric ever to make effective use of it."

[1] Whitman's Dutch relationship is always significant.

The general character of Millet's work is truth to life and nature. All things were beautiful for him which were congruous. The hand of the peasant was beautiful and true, and the labourers at work in the sun. Everything in the neighbourhood of Barbizon was conveyed by him to canvas. He painted the trees, the great Fontainebleau forest, the rocks, skies, land. He painted the peasants about him at their work, ploughing, sowing, reaping and gleaning, shepherds and goose-herders. All scenes which were really significant, preferring men in action, were welcome material. *Le Départ Pour le Travail* (*Starting for Work*) is especially in Whitman's style. It is of a young man and girl going to the field in the fresh morning air, full of light and motion; it has a cheerfulness rare in Millet's work, which is touched generally by the sadness of the old world. There is Whitman's energy in the strong *Les Glaneuses* (*The Gleaners*).

On the other hand there is Millet's action and mystic meaning in the many picturesque bits in Whitman's poems.

"On a flat road runs the well-train'd runner,
He is lean and sinewy, with muscular legs,
He is thinly clothed, he leans forward as he runs,
With lightly closed fists and arms partially rais'd."
By the Roadside.

"By the curb toward the edge of the flagging,
A knife-grinder works at his wheel sharpening a great knife;
Bending over, he carefully holds it to the stone; by foot and knee,

With measur'd tread he turns rapidly ; as he presses with
light but firm hand,
Forth issue then in copious golden jets
Sparkles from the wheel."

Autumn Rivulets.

" The big doors of the country-barn stand open and ready,
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-
drawn waggon,
The clear light plays on the brown, gray, and green
intertinted,
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow."

Song of Myself.

Every picture has a mystical significance.

" As I watch'd the ploughman ploughing,
Or the sower sowing in the fields, or the harvester har-
vesting,
I saw there, too, O life and death, your analogies.
(Life, life is the tillage, and Death is the harvest
according.)

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

The common occupations of men are sung, the joys of the farmer, the woodman, the engineer, each in his way—

" O, to work in mines, or forging iron,
Foundry casting, the foundry itself, the rude high roof,
the ample and shadow'd space,
The furnace, the hot liquid pour'd out and running."

Song of the Open Road.

Some pictures have the quiet contentment of old Dutch paintings.

"Behold a woman!
She looks out from her Quaker cap, her face is clearer and more beautiful than the sky.
She sits in an arm-chair under the shaded porch of the farm-house,
The sun just shines on her old, white head."
From Noon to Starry Night.

"Through the ample open door of the peaceful country barn,
A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding,
And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away."[1]
By the Roadside.

Thus related to the old, starting from Paumanok where he was born, after roaming many lands, after studying at the feet of the great masters, having studied men and birds and stars Walt Whitman, solitary, singing in the West, strikes up for a New World:

"Victory, union, faith, identity, time,
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports."
Starting from Paumanok.

[1] A discussion of Whitman's artistic method, in its relation to that of Richard Wagner, is reserved for another section.

VI.—BROWNING AND WHITMAN.

"Do you see who have left all feudal processes and poems behind them, and assumed the poems and processes of Democracy?"

BETWEEN Browning and Whitman there are points of contact not a few. Browning was born in 1812, Whitman in 1819. The two poets started in life with much the same thought and passion capital. A few metaphysical conceptions underlie their writings from first to last, the tendency to philosophic thinking being accounted for, perhaps, by a similar strain of Teutonic[1] ancestry. Whitman is as profound a thinker as Browning. Philosophy is fundamental in his nature. Even as a little boy he listened with

[1] Whitman's mother was a Van Velsor of true Dutch temper, an hereditary fact which answers for far more than the poet's philosophic tendencies. As we now know (cf. *The Puritan in Holland, England and America*, by Douglas Campbell, New York), the characteristic American sentiments and institutions are of Holland-Puritan heritage.

Browning's mother was Scotch-German, her father being William Wiedemann, a Hamburg German. From her, Browning derived his thoughtful nature, as well, probably, as his evangelical and liberal temper.

amaze at the preacher who taught the duality of the universe. No one is more repulsive than he, if read superficially. He is not so "easy to be played on as a pipe." There is not a body of writings in literature which demands a wider conversancy with the best that has been thought or said in the world. For in his works are shown only results, never processes. The obscurity—and *Leaves of Grass* is as hard to read as *Sordello*—is thus that connected with prophecy. "You will pardon some obscurities," said Thoreau in *Walden*, "for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's, and yet not voluntarily kept, but inseparable from its very nature." Browning is essentially a dramatist, and arrives at a similar result, but by other and indirect means. When *Leaves of Grass* first appeared in 1855—that strange first volume, so unlike a book, so very like a man—Emerson wrote to the author: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere for such a start."

That foreground of thought may be found in Browning's earlier works, *Pauline*, *Paracelsus*, and *Sordello*, which are in so large a degree autobiographic and the writer's own thought-basis. Therein stress is laid upon the development of the soul, the individual as self-centred and self-governed, and the necessity of passage from selfish into sympathetic existence.

The ethical problem of good and evil is solved by either poet in the precisely similar terms of ethica idealism which, postulating the universe as a unity,

requires the presence of what we call evil as a necessary condition of man's spiritual energy and growth.

The scientific basis, such as belief in doctrines of evolution, continuity of organic life, conservation of energy, will be found to be likewise identical.

Oddly the criticism passed on *Pauline* in 1833, "Somewhat mystical, somewhat poetical, somewhat sensual, and not a little unintelligible," served with varied phrase to welcome *Leaves of Grass* in 1855. One thing, at least, in common—they were both misunderstood.

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§ 1.—THE PERSONALITY.

"I only knew one poet in my life,
And this, or something like it, was his way."
How it Strikes a Contemporary.

Whitman's first great thought on life is of the Self. Pride and love, or self and society, constitute "the unseen impetus and moving power" of all his writings. But the self is prior, gives meaning and vitality to all life, law, love, or beauty.

"And I will not make a poem, nor the least part of a poem, but has reference to the soul,
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find there is no one, nor any particle of one, but has reference to the soul."
Starting from Paumanok.

"The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual—namely, to You."
By Blue Ontario's Shore.

"One's-self must never give way—that is the final substance—that out of all is sure,
Out of politics, triumphs, battles, life, what at last finally remains?
When shows break up what but One's-self is sure?"

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

"The only government is that which makes minute of individuals."

By Blue Ontario's Shore.

"We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say they are not divine.
I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still;
It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life."

A Song for Occupations.

It is that the individual, while related to society as a member, has a meaning in and for himself. On the side of society he is but one of the human race, and is a means; on the side of his personality he is related to the Absolute, has divine attributes and has his end in himself. And to sing the divinity of man Whitman has essayed. To exploit his own personality, candidly and uncompromisingly, was the purpose of *Leaves of Grass*; nothing goes forth that is not penetrated with himself. The personal element comprises the unique quality of his book more precious than houses and gold.

"Camerado, this is no book,
Who touches this touches a man."

Songs of Parting.

Every line and thought of his poems have reference to the soul, but

"Thou, reader, throbbest life and pride and love the same as I,
Therefore for thee the following chants."

Inscriptions.

Whitman takes as his starting-point an average man in average circumstances who is still grand and heroic. No one is excepted, for organic life must be interdependent.

"Do you think matter has coher'd together from its diffuse float, and the soil is on the surface, and water runs and vegetation sprouts
For you only, and not for him and her?"

Children of Adam.

Each is here as divinely as any is here. That perfect loveliness which writers like Goethe profess for men of culture is shown to belong to the complete ordinary character.

"Painters have painted their swarming groups, and the centre-figure of all,
From the head of the centre-figure, spreading a nimbus of gold-colour'd light,
But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-colour'd light."

Birds of Passage.

For the ordinary has meaning the same as the exceptional; the need is that our eyes be opened. Each, no matter what his birth, or occupation, or condition, is out on the same open road of the Universe.

"Forever alive, forever forward,
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbulent, feeble, dissatisfied,
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected by men."

Song of the Open Road.

The equality of a democracy, it should be observed, is not one of possession or attainment—no one is equal to another in that way—but with respect to destiny. Human rights are not "natural" or derived from the past, but are related to ideals of what ought and is to be. The idea that "one man is as good as another" is a foreign and false interpretation of the American conception of equality before God. Democracy recognises we are out on the road together travelling to the same destination.

"I show that size is only development."

Song of Myself.

"I do not call one greater and one smaller,
That which fills its period and place is equal to any."

Song of Myself.

"The universe is duly in order, everything is in its place,
What has arrived is in its place, and what waits shall be in its place. . . .
The child of the glutton or venerealee waits long, and the child of the drunkard waits long, and the drunkard himself waits long."

The Sleepers.

Whitman yields the utmost of homage to the Woman.

"I am the poet of the woman, the same as the man,
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men."

Song of Myself.

In memory of his own mother, "to her, buried and gone, yet buried not, gone not from me," "to her the ideal woman, practical, spiritual, of all of earth, life, love, to me the best," he graves a monumental line. America is reserved by him as the "great woman's land," and his only fear is that with all the gifts of wealth and power vouchsafed his country—

"What if one gift thou lackest? (the ultimate human problem never solving,)
The gift of perfect women fit for thee—what if that gift of gifts thou lackest?"

By virtue of motherhood the woman is given the superior place in the race-economy. But her claim is finally for an equal selfhood. She, too, is out on the open road.

He detects a similar equality in things and events. A leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars. External objects furnish their part towards eternity.

"And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be turn'd to beautiful results."

Starting from Paumanok.

It would seem that he lacked the sense of proportion, but his position is logically consistent.

"The soul is of itself,
All verges to it, all has reference to what ensues,
All that a person does, says, thinks, is of consequence."
Autumn Rivulets.

All is finally truth. Truth compacts all, the false and true.

"And henceforth I will go celebrate anything I see or am,
And sing and laugh and deny nothing."
From Noon to Starry Night.

This is no doubt a form of pantheism—is that so hateful a word? Modern thought is rapidly becoming pantheistic in the same sense. And the ethical problem now presented is the reconciliation of the idea of a universal benevolent law and that of a moral being under that law, yet free to choose or to refuse. This is the problem which Browning meets fairly, without fear. He relinquishes no jot of his belief in the all-pervading power of love and the essential divinity of man. Like Whitman he is no hero-worshipper or event-worshipper. In thought and method the idea of personality is given supreme expression; this is alike the central principle of his philosophy and the burden of his art. He has faith in spiritual manhood, which proves for him an essential democracy. Tennyson plucked a flower from the crannied wall, and said,—

"If I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

Browning would glorify the meanest man as a like manifestation of creative thought. With Shelley he might say, "I am the friend of the unfriended poor." In his parleying with Gerard he matches the worth of the commonplace with Festus' robe and Fortunatus' cap. The world gathers about each of us to draw forth whatever of spiritual worth may be potential there (cf. *Epilogue*). Nothing is in vain. The least action of a man—failure it may be—is a step in his conscious development. Each incident in the wider arena of history is "a pulsation of the life of the highest." Each person, however neglected by the historians—the simple Briton pilot, Hervé Riel, for instance—has importance in the general, organic scheme of life.

"Go to Paris: rank on rank
Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!
You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel."

Hervé Riel.

"There is no last nor first," sang Pippa.

Browning portrays no character without relations to the Infinite. There is no creature, but that

"Some way it boasts, could we investigate,
Its supreme worth."

Fifine at the Fair.

Not Pippa, or Ottima, or Fifine, not Paracelsus, not the Grammarian, not Halbert or Hob, not Dog Tray,

not Guido—him even, are without their "nimbus of gold-colour'd light." Even Caliban, who is so uncouth that he cannot speak in terms of his own personality, but "thinketh" and "saith," even the undeveloped monster is not content to sprawl in the mud complaining of the God. What is the event and who the characters of his masterpiece, *The Ring and the Book*, that Browning should lavish the resources of his mature genius upon them? —a case dug out of a yellow-leaved record of crime, long thrown aside on old book-stalls, the incidents of which had long since passed from human memory! Pompilia an obscure commonplace girl! Guido great only in crime! Spenser would have scorned to spend such pains: his song was of "knights and ladies gentle deeds;" he loved the stately hall of nobles and the courts of kings. Shakespeare, too, is a natural aristocrat, the poet of feudal forms and processes. Kings and lords, citizens, fools, and hirelings are, it is true, portrayed with equal care and fidelity; but what commonplace character is thought worthy of a fate. Like the Greek drama, Shakespeare exhibits the aristocracy of woe. We take Dogberry at his word when he urges us to write him down an ass. The great criminal is, however, given tragic meaning. Iago is, perhaps, a greater compound of crime than Guido. But observe the difference in the poets' treatment, which amounts to a complete revolution of dramatic thought and purpose. Browning is the dramatist of the Whitman principle.

"He, at least, believed in Soul, was very sure of God."

He justifies the pride of man in himself by showing in dramatic process men and women, various in being and action, under every condition of evil or of error, but never unguided by the light of an interior motive and the hope of ultimate attainment. Whitman's announcement is general; he is thinking of average, typical men. Browning animates his pages with specific and personal characters who may be "sunk enough, God knows!" but never so sunk but that this or that poor impulse, which for once had play unstifled, indicates the spirit's true endowments.

"Is there a reason in nature for these hard hearts? O Lear,
That a reason out of nature must turn them soft seems clear."

Halbert and Hob.

It is the custom to complain of Browning's psychology. Few can repress a fling at his "marvellous feats of psychological gymnastic." A truer insight might have revealed the important nature of such dramatic habit, which is—ye who like him not—one of the very profound indications of the Christian and democratic temper of modern life, namely, the interpretation of concrete human existence.

The tendency of modern drama is towards psychic presentment. Honouring to its worth the play-house, its simulated stature, painted scenes and stage, it yet takes

"For a worthier stage the soul itself,
Its shifting fancies and celestial lights,

With all its grand orchestral silences
To keep the pauses of the rhythmic sounds."
Aurora Leigh.

Modern drama is, in short, internal, personal, democratic—" inward evermore to outward." Shakespeare could not fully escape from the Greek tragic sense of necessity. The passage from the old spirit to the new is presented in the music-dramas of Richard Wagner. The growth of Wagner's dramatic principle is illustrative. His first works were projected after the Greek model, with added mediæval artifice and mystical symbolism. He was at first impressed in his study of life by the fact of man's helplessness. The dark-visaged wandering mariner, whose life reflects the pessimism of his world, is a very type of fate-driven man. In the two more Christian romances help comes still from without, in *Tannhäuser* by the intervention of the Pope, in *Lohengrin* by a knight of the Holy Grail. *Tristan and Isolde* has its fate-principle in the love-drink. With the Nibelung tetralogy Wagner's pessimistic views become most conspicuous. The key to each drama is in externals. Wotan is the embodiment of arbitrary will. Men and gods together are impelled by blind, unintelligent power. Wagner was then directly under the influence of Schopenhauer; and the Eddic mythology, constructed during the long winters and nights and amid the pitiless nature of the northern clime, probably in terror of sea and weather, furnished him suitable material. But the dawn of a new heaven and earth

came soon after the twilight of the gods. Wotan sank with his world. The empire of external will ends, so far as Wagner is concerned, with the fall of Valhalla. There is demand for restoration. The poet is saved from pessimism, and carried far beyond it, by the creation of Parsifal, who is to redeem the world from curse by love and by his heart's mastery over fate. Still in Siegfried we recognise the precursor of Parsifal, and Brunhilde's victory over the lower principles of nature typifies the final triumph of the soul. Siegfried is redeemed from the gods of the elder world; but his destiny is fixed even before his birth; as a youth he wields a magic sword against which not even the spear of Wotan has might; voices of wood-birds lead him on; and against fate he cannot prevail. The only satisfaction to the character-motive is that his activities spring from his love of life, that he is endowed with the magic sword by his own efforts, and that he remains without fear.

Parsifal comes before us first as a youth, full of abounding life, like Siegfried. But he is more than a hero; he is a Saviour. Redemption by love and by man is the theme of Wagner's last and in every way greatest work. He reconciles the forces hitherto in tragic collision. Love and will operate within the human spirit. The area of their working is the one human person who passes from stage to stage in processes of spiritual and psychical education. Man conquers fate. The dramatic solution has passed forever from gods to men. The whole play of *Parsifal* is radiant with light and hope. And Parsifal redeems

not because of any external compact, but because he is what he is, because he has attained by struggle within his own soul the conquest over sin and death. Kundry, as a type of a struggling and finally redeemed soul, is Wagner's most striking character, and, at the same time, one of the most impressive and original creations in literature. Wagner's last word on life is, in this respect, modern, psychical, democratic.

Between Wagner and Browning, Ibsen stands midway. Wagner has, perhaps, dealt with weightier matters than Ibsen, but both singularly illustrate in their own life-struggle the psychical method of their art. Ibsen has the same northern imagination, the same Teutonic melancholy. He is the poet of the Norway winter, its ice and night; one would think that all the land is bleak, barren, and storm-beaten; there is hardly a suggestion of sunshine and flowers. As a child, Ibsen loved darkness rather than light. Nor are his works uninfluenced by the pessimism of fatalism. The Emperor Julian is conquered at length by the world-will which favours the Galilean, and he falls with the cry, "Thou hast conquered Galilean." Of the writer's earlier works, the idea of a call is the key of interpretation, a call which seems at times, as in *Brand*, to be one of necessity. After his dream of social regeneration had been shattered by the failure of the Paris Commune, he seems to have taken especial delight in picturing social chaos. *The Wild Duck* is pessimistic in the extreme.

Up to a certain point, Ibsen is the dramatist of the philosophy of Carlyle. He believes in aristocracy—

"I mean," he explains, "the aristocracy of character, of will, of mind." He has Carlyle's distrust of popular movements and of majorities. Carlyle's dictum concerning the people of England—"mostly fools," is paralleled by a similar remark of Ibsen of the Norwegians—"cats and dogs." They both would build society upon pillars of truth and sincerity—the world has not seen more intense haters of falsehood and sham. But observe how they differ, and in the difference lies the peculiar dramatic quality of Ibsen's works. Ibsen believes in the utmost of personal liberty. In a letter written to Georg Brandes in 1871, he says:—"The State is the curse of the individual. What has been the price of Prussia's strength as a State? The absorption of the individual in the political and geographical entity. The waiter is the best soldier. Away with the State! When that revolution is accomplished I will be there: undermine the notion of the State, let free will and spiritual affinity be the only recognised basis of union, and you will have the beginnings of a liberty worthy of the name." [1] His task becomes then that of Whitman, "to make every man in the land a nobleman." He dreams for mankind a redemption through love into a state of free and purified will. He insists, by consequence, upon individual development. All vital development must be from within, and natural. This principle is embodied in his dramas. The "action, action, action," of the Greeks is set aside. In his first dramatic effort

[1] *Life*, by Jaeger, trans. by Bell, p. 205.

—written at twenty—*Cataline*, there is hardly a plot, and no proper counterplot. The whole play is enacted within Cataline's own soul. Ibsen does not portray deeds so much as the results of deeds as exhibited in a life. All is inner, psychological. The interest of such a play as *The Doll's House*, which is without impressive accessories or heroic action of any kind, is centred in the psychical development of the characters themselves. The interest is intense, because the solution is human and uncertain. To take an opposite case: when we see personalised Good and Evil in Goethe's drama striving for Faust's soul, there can be little doubt as to the result, and we are not at all surprised when Faust is borne aloft by the angels with triumphant song. When the strife is within the self, a man or woman's worth something.

The first hint in English literature of redemption by spiritual struggle is perhaps contained in Milton's *Paradise Regained* (and it is interesting to note the accord of Milton and Wagner in this matter, however at variance their conceptions of the Christ may be). Milton first suggested the way to recover the paradise that was lost, the heaven within the soul, and the redemptive idea set forth in *Paradise Regained* surpasses as a justification of the ways of God to men all the stupendous machinery of *Paradise Lost*. Milton himself preferred, it is said, the former to the latter; it has better philosophy if not higher art.

> "I, who erewhile the happy Garden sung
> By one man's disobedience lost, now sing
> Recovered Paradise to all mankind,

By one man's firm obedience fully tried
Through all temptation, and the Tempter foiled
In all his wiles, defeated and repulsed,
And Eden raised in the waste wilderness."
Paradise Regained.

A commentator remarks about this passage, stating the popular opinion, no doubt, even of to-day: "It may seem a little odd that Milton should impute the recovery of Paradise to the short scene of our Saviour's life upon earth, and not rather extend it to His agony, crucifixion," etc. But Milton clearly saw that the crucifixion was but the culmination of a spiritual struggle which had gone on for long within Christ's own soul. The Cross, he would say, is not the central fact in the life of Christ, but the life itself. His redemption was not wrought by magic, not by contract. Christ was never a mere actor in that world-drama; He, most of all, took life seriously, and it is recorded of Him that He never laughed. May it not be that for Him as for others the incidents of the earth-life were

"Just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man."
In a Balcony.

So Milton rightly chose a typical incident at the beginning of Christ's Messianic mission.

"On thy glorious work
Now enter, and begin to save mankind."
Paradise Regained.

We are prepared now to understand the nature of many of the psychological problems Browning has set for us. Browning is first and foremost a dramatist of the inner life. As to the disputed point of his subjectivity, I think he must be taken at his word that his poetry is "so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine" (Preface to *Pauline*). He is subjective in that he gives expression to the subjectivity of others, and as such he is Christian and democratic. There is no hint of a fate save as "God's in the heaven," save the "Hand always above my shoulder." We may quote Whitman's line:

> "I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better, God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself." *Birds of Passage.*

There is no suggestion of pessimism; for at least "each one may love, and loving ranks with God." Holding firmly to the belief that the world is ruled by love, actuating all created being, he held with equal tenacity to the idea of the possibility of the will of man acting freely within that law—free to reach the goal in various ways, even by error and failure. Will-freedom, soul-struggle (inward evermore to outward), and soul-progress—which imply opposition, failure, hate, sin—are the three phrases which indicate Browning's dramatic significance. Paracelsus fails, corrects the error, and attains. If attainment be not won in the earth life, there is the leaf in the hand of dead Evelyn Hope to suggest that there are "other heights in other lives, God willing."

The crux of a democratic philosophy is plainly the outcast, the abandoned, the soul-hardened criminal—"oh, a crime will do to serve for a test." How can they be included in the moral and social scheme of life! Whitman, with a cheery optimism, includes them all: "Not till the sun excludes you will I exclude you." To the universal banquet

"The kept-woman, sponger, thief are hereby invited,
The heavy-lipped slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;
There shall be no difference between them and the rest."

Song of Myself.

"I will make the songs of passion to give them their way,
And your songs outlaw'd offenders, for I scan you with kindred eyes, and carry you with me the same as any."

Starting from Paumanok.

Browning, in like manner, crowds his pages with specific criminals, not, like the school of Zola, to describe them, but to justify them. He would show the truth beneath the falsehood. He would show that each of the many "helps to recruit the life of the race by a general plan," be his soul's fruit hate or love. In some way the existence of Fifine must be justified, else is she created in vain, "which must not be."

His trial of strength was his defence of Guido Franceschini, whose life-story is found in an old

record of crime, a "blotch of black." It was no light task. If the facts of life were against his philosophy, the only alternative was despair or the quiet acquiescence of the lotus-eater. Guido was one of the vilest compounds of criminality which literature or life have recorded. Browning set the case in order—there is the book to show for it. The "main monster" is painted with unsparing literalism :

> "Count Guido Franceschini, the Aretine,
> Descended of an ancient house, though poor,
> A beak-nosed, bushy-bearded, black-haired lord,
> Lean, pallid, low of stature, yet robust,
> Fifty years old."
>
> *Ring and the Book*, i., 780-84.

He is set in a suitable environment, in the midst of a dark, subsidiary brotherhood, "denizens o' the cave:" Paolo, the "fox-faced, horrible priest;" "the boy of the brood, the young Girolamo;" "then comes the gaunt, grey nightmare in the furthest smoke, the hag that gave these three abortions birth;" "last, these God-abandoned, wretched lumps of life," the murderers. And ranged against them are old Pietro and Violante, not over scrupulous, "sadly mixed natures." Only the one pure white woman-lily, the newly awakened priest, the serene aged Pope to serve as contrast to the shade. Guido is permitted to wreak his worst and is brought to judgment at last. One half of Rome condemns—"Out with you from the common light, and air, and life of man." The other half finds for Guido much excuse. "He is noble and may be innocent," suggests the upper class. Judgment which

is "honest enough as the way is, all the same harbouring in the centre of its sense a hidden germ of failure." Guido mutters, "Hardly misfortune, and no fault at all." But Caponsacchi, in the heat of his passion, urges upon the judges,—

> "Leave Guido all alone
> Back on the world again that knows him now!
> I think he will be found (indulge so far!)
> Not to die so much as slide out of life,
> Pushed by the general horror and common hate
> Low, lower,—left o' the very ledge of things,
> I seem to see him catch convulsively
> One by one at all honest forms of life, . . .
> And thus I see him slowly and surely edged
> Off all the table-land whence life upsprings
> Aspiring to be immortality. . . .
> So I leave Guido in the loneliness,
> Silence, and dusk, till at the doleful end,
> At the horizontal line, creation's verge,
> From what just is to absolute nothingness—
> Whom is it, straining onward still, he meets? . . .
> Judas, made monstrous by much solitude!
> The two are at one now! . . .
> There let them grapple, denizens o' the dark,
> Foes or friends, but indissolubly bound,
> In their one spot out of the ken of God
> Or care of man, forever and evermore!"
>
> *Ring and the Book*, vi., 1908-54.

There is awful earnestness there, and the words commend themselves to many, perhaps to most. But Pompilia has all along "sent prayer like incense up for that most woeful man my husband once."

"So far as lies in me,
I give him for his good the life he takes, . . .
Let him make God amends,—none, none to me. .
We shall not meet in this world nor the next,
But where will God be absent? In His face
Is light, but in His shadow healing too;
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed!"

Ring and the Book, vii., 1707-21.

The wise Pope, who has light nor fears the dark at all, sums up the case in the quiet of his soul. Of previous judgments he comments that truth, while not in any one, is evolvible from the whole. The matter is reviewed: Guido began life well, "fortified by propitious circumstance, great birth, good breeding, with the Church for guide." But this black mark impinges the man that he believes in just the vile of life. "Not one permissible impulse moves the man." What then! Is he to be excluded? In the creation there is strength enough, intelligence enough. Christ proved that love also is limitless. The universe is thus shown complete. The Pope has, therefore, faith in the world, faith that sin and sorrow have their purpose to evolve the moral qualities of man. The foremost fact is that

"Life is but the starting-point of man: compel him strive,
Which means, in man, as good as reach the goal,—
Why institute that race, his life, at all?"

Ring and the Book, x., 1436-39.

The Pope will not stay the execution of the criminals. But he has for Guido the hope of a suddenness of fate.

"I stood at Naples once, a night so dark
I could have scarce conjectured there was earth
Anywhere, sky, or sea, or world at all:
But the night's black was burst through by a blaze—
Thunder struck blow on blow, earth groaned and bore,
Through her whole length of mountain visible:
There lay the city thick and plain with spires,
And, like a ghost disshrouded, white the sea.
So may the truth be flashed out by one blow,
And Guido see one instant and be saved."

Ring and the Book, x., 2117-28.

The end is not yet. There is other hope. There is a "sad, obscure, sequestered state where God unmakes but to remake the soul He else made first in vain; *which must not be.*"

The sentence of death, carried forthwith to the Governor, finds at the prison-house one who had exerted his strength against all good in vain! Love is an essential element in human nature, and will find out its way.

"Abate,—Cardinal,—Christ,—Maria,—God,—*Pompilia*, will you let them murder me." It is the spiritual flash struck out from the soul's midnight; it is as the cry of the thief upon the cross; it is an impulse from the soul, realising at the last what love is.

This single moment may seem insufficient evidence for the conclusion drawn, but I can only answer, aside from the witness of insight which requires such conclusion (and compare Mr. Westcott's paper on *Browning's View of Life*, p. 15), that it is Browning's way to state a fact obliquely. In *Prince Hohensteil-Schwangau*

there is a story told of an artist who covered up the Laocoön group, save the central figure, with neither sons nor serpents to denote the purpose of the gesture. Then a crowd was called to explain the reason of such energy of legs and arms, and eyeballs starting from their sockets. One said: "I think the gesture strives against some obstacle we cannot see." All the rest said: "'Tis a yawn of sheer fatigue subsiding to repose; the statue is 'Somnolency' clear enough." The problem here is to know the mind of the maker. Now Browning, unlike Shakespeare, seldom dramatises for the sake of dramatic action alone. He is rather the dramatist of a principle (cf. *Gold Hair: The Statue and the Bust; The Grammazian's Funeral; The Last Ride Together; Halbert and Hob*, etc.), holding further that

> "Art's fittest triumph is to show that good
> Lurks in the heart of evil evermore."

In the present instance, the whole interest of the book is centred in Guido's conversion and the comments of every character, and especially the last words of the Pope, as well as Browning's own philosophy of love, and his stated intention to "twice show truth beyond mere imagery on the wall," as well as his suggestion that the record lives, "if precious be the soul of man to man," lead directly to the cry of combined remorse and hope, "Pompilia."

One said, in his haste, that it was still a sign of meanness in Guido to seek safety from a woman. But it is that Guido realised *in himself* at the last the

power of divine love, which can only operate in the heart of man, and which is revealed in its most pure and perfect form through woman. For a somewhat similar use of the principle of saving love, compare Wagner's *Der Fliegende Holländer Tannhäuser* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and Goethe's *Faust*. In the first, Senta, leaping into the sea at the moment of shipwreck, achieves for the Jew surcease of sorrow. Tannhäuser sinks lifeless by the body of Elisabeth with the cry on his lips, "Heilige Elisabeth bitte für mich!" while the pilgrims sing in chorus,—

> "Heil! Heil! Der Gnade Wunderheil!" and
> "Hoch über alle Welt ist Gott
> Und sein Erbarmen ist kein Spott!
> Halleluja! Helleluja!"

In the postlude to *Die Götterdämmerung*, amid the basses which review the fall of the ancient rule of gold and greed, the violins, with ever finer harmonies, take up the melody heard before in the song of Sieglinde prophetical of the redeeming love of Brunhilde, and now actually symbolical, proclaim that "the woman-soul leadeth us upward and on." In *Faust* the Chorus Mysticus, in the same manner, sings at the close,—

> "Alles Vergängliche
> Ist nur ein Gleichniss;
> Das Unzulängliche,
> Hier wird's Greigniss;
> Das Unbeschreibliche,
> Hier ist es Gethan;

Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan."

"All things transitory
But as symbols are sent:
Earth's insufficiency
Here grows to Event
The Indescribable,
Here it is done;
The Woman-Soul leadeth us
Upward and on!"

BAYARD TAYLOR, Translator.

And compare Lowell's *Das Ewig-Weibliche.*

"Still must the body starve our souls with shade;
But when Death makes us what we were before,
Then shall *her* sunshine all our depths invade,
And not a shadow stain heaven's crystal floor."

Hate, as Pompilia suggests, was the truth of Guido. His choice of evil was the beginning of hope. Energy characterised his adoption of evil. He sought it with his whole strength. Indifference would have been reason for despair.

"If you choose to play!—is my principle,
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will."

The Statue and the Bust.

In much the same spirit Luther was wont to urge, "Pecca fortiter." And the Pope finds much amiss in the half-hearted ways of the parents:

"Never again elude the choice of tints!
White shall not neutralise the black, nor good
Compensate bad in man, absolve him so:
Life's business being just the terrible choice."
Ring and the Book, x. 1234-38.

Guido lived out the life which was true for him. And this life was his way—"you of the virtue we issue join"—to the goal of his higher nature. Assertion of self showed the futility of a loveless life. "If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise," is Blake's way of stating the fact of progression. For the soul cannot rest in sin. The will must be reserved at all hazards, or there is no human world.

And this, it is worthy of note, is the conclusion of *Faust*. The angels sing, concluding,—

"Who ever
Strives forward with unswerving will—
Him can we aye deliver."

There is demanded, however, by Browning, a severer moral strife. Faust was saved by no great merit of his own, rather by grace. But the law of the soul is really progressive. And Browning's record lives "if precious be the soul of man to man." However,—

"It's wiser being good than bad;
It's safer being meek than fierce:
It's fitter being sane than mad."

In any case,—

> " My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched,
> That after Last returns the First,
> Though a wide compass round be fetched,
> That what began best can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."
>
> *Apparent Failure.*

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§ 2.—MAN AND NATURE.

Whitman's subject is the soul of man. Thought is the ultimate reality. The soul, (love, and reason, and will,) constitutes the universe; Nature alone is but a universe becoming. Thought gives to Nature all its meaning. Only man is sacred.

> " How dare you place anything before a man."
>
> *By Blue Ontario's Shore.*

It is not the earth that is great. It is man who is great.

> " I have lived to behold man burst forth and warlike America rise,
> Hence I will seek no more the food of the northern solitary wilds,
> No more the mountains roam or sail the stormy sea."
>
> *Drum-Taps.*

Once only Whitman turns to greet the sun.

" Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full dazzling. . . .
Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me again, O Nature, your primal sanities ! "

Drum-Taps.

But his soul tramples down at once what it asked for.

" Keep your splendid silent sun,
Keep your woods, O Nature, and the quiet places by the woods,
Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and your corn-fields and orchards,
Keep the blossoming buck-wheat fields where the ninth-month bees hum ;
Give me faces and streets . . .
People endless, streaming, with strong voices, passions, pageants, * * *
Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus ! "

Drum-Taps.

While thus asserting the superiority of man and his works, he yet identifies himself with the whole objective world.

" When the full-grown poet came,
Out spake pleased Nature (the round impassive globe, with all its shows of day and night), saying, *He is mine ;*

But out spake too the Soul of man, proud, jealous, and unreconciled, *Nay, he is mine alone;*
—Then the full-grown poet stood between the two, and took each by the hand;
And .to-day and ever so stands, as blender, uniter, tightly holding hands,
Which he will never release until he reconciles the two,
And wholly and joyously blends them."

Good-bye, my Fancy.

This sense of the blending of all life spheres, one has often to remark, is the chief characteristic of Whitman's philosophy. Once alone with a great oak tree he questions "Am I alone?" feeling that the qualities which exist consciously in man exist—shall it be said unconsciously—in Nature. He found the law of his poems in the wide rolling western prairies, and among the tumbled rock-piles and turbulent gorges of the mountains. In the Canons of Colorado he ponders:

"Mine, too, such arrays, for reasons of their own;
Was't charged against my chants they had forgotten art? . . .
But thou that revelest here—spirit that formed this scene,
They have remember'd thee."

From Noon to Starry Night.

Nature is never described for itself. On the other hand Whitman excells all other American writers as a word-painter of Nature in its human aspect. A near approach to description is *The Man-of-War Bird* and *Warble for Lilac-Time.* But in the first case, he wishes the bird his soul, then "what joys were thine!"

In the second case, the summer's sparkling restlessness betokens the need of the soul to be up and away, the blue sky, the grass, the lilac, the morning drops of dew, serving as preludes to the soul's flight. Rather immersed in Nature he translates its hidden meaning into his poet-speech; he is the voice of the Redwood tree and of the hermit thrush; and the sea (the old crone) creeping to his feet whispers her secret. This quality of his thought, primarily a religious quality, is one secret of his power. His poems thrill and dilate the spirit similar to the words of Christ, "I and my Father are one."

"I too inaugurate a religion, each is not for its own sake,
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's sake."

Starting from Paumanok.

It is well to attend to this view of man's place in Nature as indicating the tendency of democracy to concern itself with personality. Nature, in America, is characterised by vastness and sublimity. The traveller's first impressions, in sailing the fresh rivers and lakes, traversing the plains or passing the mountains, in entering the forests of pine and cedar of the North and South, are ever of size and infinite distances. It seems as if plain and mountain, river and forest, had conspired to oppress man. At this moment a sister writes to me from central Iowa: "Nothing but endless plain! Men seem so small here beneath the far skies! And the winds are never still!" Those who dwell habitually in the midst of the quiet, mellow, English gardens,

where Nature has been tamed and domesticated by centuries of human occupation, can never know the tension of mind, which often must succumb from very weariness, required of those who make their homes amid the vastnesses of the New World. Perhaps a less transcendent mind than the early pilgrim, one less concerned about God and the soul, would have been subdued amid the "forests primeval." But they went thither to find a refuge-home, and they conquered the forests for conscience' sake. Nature was viewed in its religious aspect, or in reference to the human personality. It is ideality that gives to Bryant's nature-songs and Lowell's wood-notes their peculiar artistic quality. "To insure health," wrote Thoreau in his *Journal*, "a man's relation to Nature must come very near to a personal one." And in *Walden* it is written that "Nature must be viewed humanly to be viewed at all; that is, her scenes must be associated with human affections, such as are associated with one's native place, for instance. She is most significant to a lover."

To give this latter thought illustration, compare Browning's poem, *By the Fireside*. The lovers are alone in the Alpine valley, but the twilight and the evening star have grown aware. The lights and shades of evening weave the marriage-spell about them.

> "The forests had done it; there they stood;
> We caught for a moment the powers at play:
> They had mingled us so, for once and good,
> Their work was done—we might go or stay,
> They relapsed to their ancient mood."
>
> xlviii.

It is such moments of passionate significance that Browning chose in Nature to portray; the night of the lightning storm at Naples, suggesting the flash of Guido's conversion; the moment of the tempest in *Pippa Passes*, a scene which Mr. Lowell has observed is an untrue description of Nature, but true for the guilty lovers; the hour when David walked home under the stars, all Nature pulsing in harmony with his thought.

For Browning consciousness is ultimate. Nature finds itself in man, prefiguring or echoing his existence.

> "For many a thrill
> Of kinship, I confess to, with the powers
> Called Nature: animate, inanimate,
> In parts, or in the whole, there's something there
> Manlike that somehow meets the man in me."
> *Prince H-Schwangau.*

Love is the law at once of Nature and of man.

> "Brute and bird, reptile and the fly,
> Ay, and I nothing doubt, even tree, shrub, plant
> And flower o' the field, are all in a common pact
> To worthily defend the trust of trusts,
> Life from the Ever Living."
> *Ring and the Book*, x., 1076-81.

Nature is never described in and for itself.

> "The wise thrush, he sings each song twice over
> Lest you should think he never could recapture
> The first fine, careless rapture!"
> *Home Thoughts from Abroad.*

This is one of the most beautiful touches in the literature of nature-poetry. It is manifestly something more than a description of the bird's song. "I think," says Thoreau, "the most important requisite in describing an animal is to be sure that you give its character and spirit." Browning's birds and beasts are human, with a heart and soul. The grand lines in *Paracelsus*, beginning,—

> "The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
> And the earth changes like a human face"—

are really the projection of a thought, and so elsewhere.

That entire absorption of Nature by the personality is rarely indicated, because Browning is dealing with men in action; but that this is the point of view from which he writes is often shown. As Paracelsus states:

> "Man, once descried, imprints forever
> His presence on all lifeless things: the winds
> Are henceforth voices, wailing, or a shout, [cf. *James Lee's Wife*, vi.,]
> A querulous mutter, or a quick, gay laugh,
> Never a senseless gust now man is born.
> The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,
> A secret they assemble to discuss,
> When the sun drops behind their trunks, which glare
> Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat
> Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
> Swims bearing high above her head: no bird
> Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above

That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye.
The moon has enterprise, deep quiet droops
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:
—And this to fill us with regard for man."

Paracelsus.

The idea of Nature is like all other thoughts in process of evolution. It may be unfair, except for the sake of contrast, to refer to the pretty descriptiveness of Thomson, Dyer, or Cowper, though fresh and delightful their sentiments are as one emerges from the elegant, correct artificiality of the preceding "Augustan Age."

"At length the finished garden to the view
Its vistas opens, and its alleys green.
Snatched through the verdant maze the hurried eye
Distracted wanders; now the bowery walk
Of covert close, where scarce a speck of day
Falls on the lengthened gloom, protracted sweeps;
Now meets the bending sky; the river now,
Dimpling along, the breezy-ruffled lake,
The forest darkening round, the glittering spire,
The ethereal mountain and the distant main."

THOMSON: *The Seasons—Spring.*

There is a vast difference[1] between this pretty high-

[1] A truer rendering of Nature was brought in by the early English landscape painters as Constable, Crome, and Gainsborough. They painted Nature as it appeared,

soundingness and Whitman's *Song of the Redwood Tree*, or Browning's presentment of the evolution of the world.

The whole gain is on the side of personality. The struggle is directly at this point. Byron and Wordsworth turned away from man. The highest aspiration which Childe Harold attains to is to lose himself in the solitudes of Nature.

> "There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
> There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
> There is society, where none intrudes,
> By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
> I love not Man the less, but Nature more."
>
> *Childe Harold*, clxxviii.

What school-boy has not declaimed approvingly the stanza which follows, which is emblematic of the pitiless conquest of Nature over man.

> "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!
> Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
> Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
> Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
> The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
> A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,

but added a human element. "John, my boy," said old Crome, "if your subject is only a pig-sty, dignify it." Turner finally asserts the superiority of man, and paints the external world in its relationship to the human personality. (Cf. "*Modern Painters:* their superiority in the art of Landscape Painting to all the Ancient Masters; by a graduate of Oxford.")

When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown."

For the sake of contrast place beside this Whitman's lines:

"These shows of the East and West are tame compared to you;
These immense meadows, these interminable rivers, you are immense and interminable as they;
These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes of apparent dissolution, you are he or she who is master or mistress over them:
Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, elements, pain, passion, dissolution."

Birds of Passage.

Wordsworth with a "sense sublime" of the divine element in the world,—

"A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things,"—

was yet unable to rise to Browning's assurance of the presence of God amid the apparent chaos of the life of man. Man gave him only sadness.

"The world is too much with us."

On the other hand,—

"My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky."

The active principle of Wordsworth's poetry is the sense of life in Nature, and of man's life as a part thereof. He would live beneath Nature's "more habitual sway." The meanest flower that blows awakens thoughts too deep for personality to express. In Nature man would find himself.

A protest against such as Wordsworth's view is entered by Coleridge in his ode *Dejection.*

"Though I should gaze forever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor, loveless, ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth,
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!"

Of all men in England Richard Jefferies is perhaps most nearly akin to the Americans. One recognises in him and Thoreau the same mystic religious temperament, and something of the same attitude towards Nature. *The Story of my Heart* contains a beautiful record of the boy Jefferies, in the morning of life, climbing the

hill in the sweet air, searching for soul-life: "I felt myself myself." He strove to take from Nature all its beauty, grandeur, and energy. Thoreau similarly, recording his desire in the quaint parable at the beginning of *Walden* of the hound, the bay-horse and the turtle-dove, sought in Nature its ideal presence. But their habitual attitude towards man as related to Nature is quite dissimilar. Jefferies, while "observing with a poet's eye,"[1] views Nature more as an end in itself, and as a faithful delineator of external life follows rather the older school of naturalists, such as Gilbert White of Selborne. His genius was dedicated to the sun and the fields with entire detachment from the activities of men. "From my home near London," so runs the story of his life, "I made a pilgrimage almost daily to an aspen by a brook. . . . The idea of the pilgrimage was to get away from the endless and nameless circumstances of everyday existence. . . . By my daily pilgrimage I escaped from it back to the sun." He hopes that succeeding generations will be able to be idle: "I hope that nine-tenths of their time will be leisure time, that they may enjoy their days, and the earth, and the beauty of this beautiful world." Thoreau was not a naturalist at all. He had little interest in Nature for itself. As Mr. Salt once said in conversation, he was a super-naturalist. He was a critic of society, and went into

[1] "Who observing the works of Almighty God with a poet's eye has enriched the literature of his country and made himself a place among those who have made men happier and wiser." On Jefferies' tomb in Salisbury Cathedral.

Walden woods that he might find out whether life was worth living, and to gain advantage-ground from which to lecture his neighbours on "clothes" and "shelter" and "economy," and to shame them into a life of simplicity. "As I have said," referring to his life at Walden, "I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag lustily, as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to *wake my neighbours up.*" His real interest is with men. His enthusiasm is for the individual.

It is so with Browning. The "return to Nature" meant for him a return to man, who is the end and interpreter of Nature. He is neither indignant at man like Shelley, nor sorrowful like Wordsworth, nor despairful like Carlyle. With Whitman he fights for freedom and the souls of men. In the streets of the city, among every-day affairs, the fight is fought and won—not in solitude or in idleness.

Wordsworth is the poet of Nature:

"Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine."

Browning and Whitman are poets of man and democracy—are they not also poets of Nature?

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§ 3.—MAN IN HIS ENTIRETY.

Unity, to repeat, is the dominant factor in Whitman's philosophy. He asserts the whole man, the body no less than the soul.

" Not physiognomy alone, nor brain alone, is worthy for the Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier far."
Inscriptions.

Lo ! a ship starting over the unbounded sea, "spreading all sails, carrying even her moon sails ;" it is his book, himself, complete.

The premise is that which William Blake stated so strenuously long ago—then written down "indecent" —the unity of matter and spirit. Before reform can come in the world, Blake asserted in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "first the notion that man has a body distinct from the soul is to be expunged." "Man has no Body distinct from the Soul, for that which is called Body is a portion of the Soul discerned by the five senses."

Throughout the Middle Ages the elements, soul and body, were separated in thought and treatment. On the one hand were ascetic monk and theologian assuming the soul, in its nature, to be noble, and the body, in its nature, to be base. Advised St. Simeon Stylites in Tennyson's poem,—

" Mortify
Your flesh, like me, with scourges and with thorns ;
Smite, shrink not, spare not. If it may be, fast
Whole Lents and pray."

In art, also, a prohibition was laid upon the human nature. Poets chose as ideals some unsubstantial vision, some "Undine" evanescent as the mist—surely we can go no farther that way. On the other

hand were Minnesinger and *trouveré*, impulsive romancers, heirs of the pre-Christian traditions, rare protesting spirits against the dogmatism of the Church and the infidelity of art. They have taken calm, wholesome joy in life and the world, asserting, like Lippo, the value of fleshly beauty:

> "Now is this sense, I ask?
> A fine way to paint soul by painting body
> So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
> And can't fare worse!"

There were many, it is true, sunk, beast-like, in the sensual throng of Bacchus—this way too is seen to be error.

It seems that Blake was among the first to seek to reconcile the antagonism. He was never done protesting against the division of the being, one activity labelled right and another wrong. The chorus to his *Song of Liberty* chants: "Let the Priest of the Raven of dawn, no longer in deadly black, with hoarse note, curse the sons of joy. . . . For everything that lives is Holy." Again he says, "Some will say, Is not God alone the prolific? I answer, God only acts and is in existing beings or men."

The same spirit of bodily reverence emerges again in Jefferies. He was never tired of contemplating the Greek sculptures in the British Museum. "I believe in the human being, mind and flesh, form and soul." "I believe all manner of asceticism to be the vilest blasphemy."

On the whole, the tendency of the present century

has been to build the very social structure upon those bodily stones which mediæval speculation rejected.

With Browning the "value and significance of flesh" is a characteristic phrase. He regards the "flesh" as being, in a sense, antagonistic rather, a barrier to the spirit—the "carnal mesh" hems all and "makes all error;" "other heights in other lives, God willing"—but it is in no ascetic temper that he writes. Life is a mode of the soul's revelation.

> "Body and soul are one thing with two names
> For more or less elaborate stuff."
> *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country.*

The only dualism implied in his writings is a separation within man's spiritual nature, between knowledge and love, and never between the body and the soul. For by the body the soul attains identity. Only by the false can we know the true; only through the flesh can we reach the soul; only through man can we find God. All Browning's practical philosophy is held in this truth. "Eternity is in love with the production of time," is Blake's proverb. Browning always rebukes those who would degrade life.

> "I say, o'er step no least one of the rows
> That lead men from the bottom where he plants
> Foot first of all, to life's last ladder top."
> *Parl. with Christ. Smart.*

The strong life-pulse is a peculiarity of his verse.

It may be but a fancy, but I seem to understand Browning better, knowing London. Though "Italy" —Queen Mary's saying serves—be engraven on his heart, his thought is English and Londonesque. To the passionate nature of Italy is joined the active thought of England. London was for Browning (as for Spenser) "life's first native source." It is the place for a dramatic poet to be born in. The dominant sense of the city is powerful, active human will. The keynote of nearly every scene is struggle of some sort. London is rapid; it might say with Pauline, "I am made up of an intensest life," yet it lacks persistency; it is mysterious, complex, obscure, capricious, paradoxical, a tangle of myriad threads. All these go to make up the structural warp and woof of many of Browning's poems. It is needless to say that Browning is an uncompromising realist.

"He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,
Scenting the world, looking it full in face."

Follow Browning across the square in Florence to the booth at the palace-step, where he found his Book, through the ways of the city, across the bridge, till he stood at home again at Casa Guidi; or retrace the walk of Pippa from the Silkmills to Orcana, to the turret on the hill above Asola, to the Bishop's Brother's House near the Duomo—every fact is accurate, even to the old clothes sweetening in the sun, fountain railing, the "doorway where the black begins," the steps where poor girls sit, and even, as

Mr. Hall Griffin informs me, to the echo on the ridge at Asolo which Luigi calls forth. Even *Childe Roland* has its facts; the frame-work a folk-tale, its castle in Carrara, one scene from a tapestry; once walking in a blotchy waste at the edge of an English manufacturing city, there was called to mind by some internal sympathy, the very imagery of the plain, its waste soil, abandoned tools, the little spiteful river, the old horse, the gnarled scrubby tree—could this be said of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan?* The poet takes and tosses in the air a square, old, yellow book, "pure crude fact secreted from man's life when hearts beat hard and brains, high-blooded, ticked two centuries since." Has it been pointed out how the story is revealed to the reader in the manner of real life? Take a case: A tragic event has happened, the details of which are unknown to us. We make inquiry from one half of London, and from the other half, and from *tertium quid*; probably attend the trial, hear the witness of the actors themselves, the lawyers pleading, the judge's decision. And in about the time required to read through *The Ring and the Book* the whole case becomes plain.

It is no wonder at all that Browning was welcomed from the first in the great Western world, which is so large, abounding, vital, wilful, "marching to fortune not surprised by her." "In America," wrote Mrs. Browning in 1859, "he is a power, a writer, a poet,—he is read—he lives in the hearts of the people." The people of America, themselves living in an atmosphere of "character and situation," have yet lacked literary

dramatic expression. Browning for the first time furnished an activity of will and a dramatic energy akin to its own. It seems peculiarly appropriate that the first complete edition of his works in the States should appear in a Railway Time-Table.[1] Is there another poet whose tunes were born out of the "thump, thump and shriek, shriek of the train"? (that time he came down from Manchester cf. *Christmas Eve*). Well—all this is to fill us with regard for man and for the world in which the man must live. Thus are life and the body crowned—"Twine amaranth! I am priest."

It is interesting to note, by the way, how Caponsacchi, the priest of the Church, plighted to the "Bride o' the Lamb," realised the falseness of his position when he found first that life and death are means to an end, and passion uses both.

Life is indeed more than art. Art is an agency in personality. "If we had real life we should need no art," wrote Wagner. There is a curious scorn of art and the artist, otherwise inexplicable, in *In a Balcony*, *One Word More*, *The Last Ride Together*, *Cleon*, and elsewhere Browning says,—

> "Little girl with the poor coarse hand
> I turned from to a cold clay cast—

[1] Reprint of Smith, Elder & Co.'s Edition, 1868, in the Official Guide of the Chicago and Alton Railroad, in monthly issues from 1872 to 1874. It is one of the curiosities of literature. Mr. Browning procured a set for the British Museum.

I have my lesson, understand
The worth of flesh and blood at last. . . .

Flesh and bone and nerve that make
The poorest coarsest human hand
An object worthy to be scanned
A whole life long for their sole sake."

James Lee's Wife, viii.

He is no scorner of the body who wrote the glad chant of life in *Saul*.

"How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy."

Whitman breaks, perhaps, more completely with old conventions. Probably, as Mr. Ellis suggests, he examples for the first time, since the Greek ideal, the reintegration of the natural instincts of the entire man. The Greek and the Christian meet in him. His poems are as true to life as the Greek statue, and there is added the Christian element of the inner governing life. But he has not the refinement of the later Greek; he is Gothic, almost barbaric in his health and brawn. For the future of democracy he announces a larger, saner brood of men and women, a future of a free life, a simple diet, clear sweet blood, "of litheness, majestic faces, and perfect physique." Would you have the broadest culture? The secret of the making of the best poems and persons is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth.

Health is unity, wholeness, haleness; disease is separation, disintegration. All comes by the body.

But this naturalism is no longer opposed to Christianity, but in harmony with its highest truths. "Jesus," said Blake, "was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules." While Whitman trusts the impulses of nature, it is a nature which is, as it were, ethical. God is not a workman who made the world as a watch is made—does not Paley argue vainly?—or who formed the man as a potter shapes his pitcher—that metaphor of the "Potter's Wheel!" God, who is Love and Power, is rather the inherent principle of work, the evolving force, the life of the man. Whitman's naturalism is upon the higher level of our modern social truth, and is as far removed from lust on the one hand and asceticism on the other as the heavens from the earth. He consecrates the undivided being. Lust is destroyed by the natural activity of love. The flesh says not, "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die," but "All good things are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps soul."

The theology of Carlyle asserted a perpetual separation between the human and divine natures. In the new theology of democracy man's nature is held to be essentially akin to the Divine. The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. "If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy," say the Scriptures. Love is the natural activity of the soul. Sin is an interloper, abnormal, arising from abuse, disease, insanity. Life is homogeneous with duty.

"I give nothing as duties,
What others give as duties I give as living impulses,
Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?"[1]
Birds of Passage.

Observe now the meaning exhibited in Browning's monologues, that life is a progress whose law is love. Success in living is obedience, not to duty, which may only bring happiness (cf. *Bifurcation*), but to the natural impulses of one's own nature, which lead to God.

"How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does! . . .

"I am named and known by that moment's feat;
There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete,
As Nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet! . . .

[1] Sidney Lanier, in the name of art and artists (evidently impelled by his "taste" and not by his philosophy), utters a fervent protest "against a poetry which has painted a great scrawling picture of the human body, and has written under it, '*This is the soul*'; which shouts a profession of religion in every line, but of a religion that, when examined, reveals no tenet, no rubric, save that a man must be natural, must abandon himself to every passion; and which constantly roars its belief in God, but with a camerado air as if it were patting the Deity on the back, and bidding Him, *Cheer up*, and hope for further encouragement."—*English Novel*, p. 62.

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"So earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too."
By the Fireside.

The tendency which makes for righteousness is ourselves. In other words, love is the claim of the soul, duty may be only the requirement of the world.

"God never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from His fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark."
Any Wife to any Husband.

Browning does not deny the flesh because the love which he sings includes and exalts the flesh.

"Where is the use of the lips' red charm,
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
And the blood that blues the inside arm—

"Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
The earthly gift to an end divine?"
The Statue and the Bust.

Browning speaks quite in his own name in *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

"Let us not always say,
'Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!'
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!'"

By reason of *The Statue and the Bust* and *Fifine at the Fair*, Browning's name has been joined with Shelley and Byron as confusing distinctions of moral right and wrong. It may be so, and it may be that it is well that conventional morality is sometimes disturbed. But in the former poem the sin, for Browning, consisted in the absence of valour, in the failure to put forth will. "He who desires and acts not breeds pestilence," is Blake's way of putting it. The latter poem is an attempt to find room in an optimistic philosophy for the lowest of God's creatures. "Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you."

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§ 4.—LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

Browning and Whitman are in substantial agreement as to the meaning of life. The thought of the one may be given in the words of the other.

"This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good."

"Law must be active in earth or nowhere."

They have not been vanquished, like Carlyle and Byron, by the problems of man's destiny. Life is for the individual an episode in the history of an immortal being. It is the period of probation or opportunity for identity, character building, and self-realisation with reference to eternity. The present and the future are, for them, thoughts inseparably blended.

"I know the past was great, and the future will be great,
And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present time,
And that where I am or you are this present day is the centre of all days, all races,
And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of races and days, or ever will come."

Birds of Passage.

The present proves the soul worthy, and all things are at work moulding the soul into finer form for purposes beyond.

"It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother and father, it is to identify you."

Proud Music of the Storm.

"And I have dream'd that the purport and essence of the known life, the transient,
Is to form and decide identity for the unknown life, the permanent."

Proud Music of the Storm.

"I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man."

In a Balcony.

"Machinery just meant
To give the soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed."

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

"What good, O life?
That you are here—that life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse."

By the Roadside.

As a condition of probatory education, stress is laid upon the presence of what we call evil in the world.

"I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also."

Evil blends with good in a manner proportioned to the education of a free, rational, and religious being, who is kin to God, and intended to yield Him praise. Progress requires failure. "Without contraries is no progression," said Blake. We are beginning to believe that the "Fall," by which "Death came into the world and all our woe," was a necessary step in the evolution of the moral nature of the race; that the advance out of evil consists in the elimination of the lower elements of nature, that evil can be but transient, a chastisement of the Father, a stepping-stone, as it were, to our higher selves, a means to an end; only the good continues and is eternal. Why, "amelioration is one of the earth's words."

This philosophic insight is the secret of the poets' optimism. There is an optimism which is mere sunniness of temper; there is a pessimism which is mere fault-finding. There is an optimism which refuses to see the ills of life, as there is a pessimism which refuses to see the good. Carlyle took Emerson through the streets of London, propounding at every step if this or that were evil, but Emerson's eyes were blind, refusing to acknowledge what the other saw. Carlyle's pessimism was far deeper than Emerson's optimism; it recognised the good and the evil of the world, though failing to correlate. Of this same deeper nature is the

optimism of Browning and Whitman. After coming in direct contact with the misery and mistakes of life, never blind to the actual results of evil, they yet hold that good is the heart of all; for God is love, eternal and universal.

It is a restatement of the Scriptural hope, that all things are working together for good. It arises more directly from the optimistic philosophy set forth by the German idealists. The thought was recognised in literature by Blake, and, in this century, has been re-asserted by many of our most profound thinkers, by Browning and Whitman, by Kingsley, by Roden Noel in *A Modern Faust*,[1] by none so pertinently as by George Macdonald.

It will not do, by the way, to ignore the contribution of the poets and secular writers to current theologic thought. We often fail of seeing how the higher literature of this century is pervaded by religious ideas in a way the eighteenth century would have deemed impossible, and from which its fine wits would have turned with much disdain. That the poets have had a message to deliver is no failure of their art. Browning's message—he too is a prophet—is of all the most significant. He set himself at the problem which lies at the basis of religious philosophy. His solution that

> "We fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,"

is a justification of the ways of God to men, in com-

[1] ". It may be the All draweth breath
From good and evil, life and death."

parison with which such a solution as that of Milton in *Paradise Lost* seems superficial.

For us a new gladness has been given, a gladness deeper than Emerson's, not shared by Byron or Carlyle, not by Matthew Arnold, and but hardly attained by the Poet Laureate. "There's a great difference between him and me," said Carlyle of Browning. "He seems very content with life, and takes much satisfaction in the world. It's a very strange and curious spectacle to behold a man in these days so confidently cheerful." It is a confidently cheerful voice that these days most need, an affirmer, without doubt, without despair, without suggestion of cynicism.

Democracy is a hope, a promise that evil is not necessary, that social conditions may be remedied, that poverty, disease, crime, cannot and shall not endure. For "God's in His heaven," and "all's right with the world."

In the *Song of the Open Road*, *Passage to India*, *Pioneers*, and often elsewhere, Whitman shows the two essential conditions of the earth-life, battle and progress.

Man is a war. He is no idle, necessary spectator in the strife of good and evil. Morality is energy of life. One side of the square Deific, in Whitman's mystical song, is doubt, defiance, revolt. Spiritual attainment is for man's own winning. Wars are fought for liberty and the souls of men. Out of every struggle we gather a spiritual fruit.

"My book and the war are one."

" I, too, haughty Shade, also sing war, and a longer and
greater one than any,
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight,
advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,
(Yet methinks, certain, or as good as certain, at the last,)
the field, the world,
For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,
Lo! I, too, am come, chanting the chant of battles—
I, above all, promote brave soldiers."

Inscriptions.

" Through untried roads with ambushed opponents lined,
Through many a sharp defeat and many a crisis often
baffled;
Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight out—
aye, here,
To fiercer, weightier battles give expression."

Drum-Taps.

" I am he who tauntingly compels men and women,
nations—
Crying, Leap from your seats and contend for your
lives."

Song of the Open Road.

" Swift to the head of the Army! Swift! Spring to your
places, Pioneers! O Pioneers."

Pioneers.

Man is a progress.

" Sail forth, steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee and thou
with me,

For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves, and all."

Passage to India.

He must out on the open road. The universe is a road for travelling souls. The road opens in never-ending vista, "stretches and waits for you," and passes on. There is no tarrying. There is no rest. To be idle is to cease to live.

"Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping."

Pioneers.

Apparent failure may be in truth success.

"Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?
I also say it is good to fall."

Song of Myself.

The road is endless, brings "none to his or her terminus, or to be content or full." "On earth the broken arcs," said Browning. What have we to do with creeds or formula? There is nothing so fixed that it is final. Thought is ever constructive and ever takes vista.

"What has succeeded? Yourself? Your nation? Nature?
Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success no matter what shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary."

Song of the Open Road.

There is no stoppage this side of the Infinite. Whitman dedicates his songs; his thoughts, himself for completion to the Invisible World. "In heaven the perfect round," agrees Browning.

"Reckoning ahead, O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,
The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done,
Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim attain'd,
All fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother found,
The Younger melts in fondness in his arms."

Passage to India.

It will be unnecessary to consider at length Browning's statement of the thought. It is part and parcel of all his works. Towards the last, Browning sought to establish a dualism within the spiritual nature of man, separation between knowledge and love, the one unknowable, the other knowable; but in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* and *The Ring and the Book* the human spirit is regarded as undivided in its progressive activity. His last words ring clear:

"No at noon day in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
'Strive and thrive!' cry 'Speed!'—fight on, fare ever
There as here."

Asolando.

Both scientific and religious doctrines, as well as poetic, underlie this conception of life.

" In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection."

Song of the Universal.

Nature outside of man is complete; with man begins a tendency to God, progress being man's distinctive mark alone,—

" Not God's and not the beasts,—God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be."

Death in the Desert.

With imperfect though growing knowledge, and with freedom of choice and consciousness of final achievement, men strive for self-realisation. The law of the battle is effort, and the tendency of its working is to set man forward in the strife; effort raises, dependence lowers. Each must achieve for himself.

" Not I, not anyone else can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself."

Song of Myself.

The struggle is personal and alone. "When the fight begins within himself a man's worth something." "Thus we half men struggle."

Browning and Whitman are men of will, men of action, such as Blake would class among the demons of his "Hell," radiating infinite energy and joy. The contrast is again with Wordsworth (a "lost leader" in very truth). When the time comes for the strife of democracy, it is the conception of the former that we need; for rest and recovery from the strong diastole

of life we may, perhaps, wish to turn to Wordsworth to lose ourselves, for the moment, in the quiet of Nature.

The meaning of life is constructed, as has been already indicated, with reference to immortality. To this thought finally both poets ascend; here they culminate.

> "Thus I believe, thus I affirm, that I am certain it is, and that from this life I shall pass to another better where that lady lives of whom my soul was enamoured."[1]

And this, by the way, is the supreme thought in democracy; for the soul is seen at length to prevail and to govern absolutely.

Browning, resting in the fundamental facts of God and consciousness (cf. *La Saisiaz*), is more intellectual in the statement of his plea than Whitman. Life is intelligible—why evil? why aspiration? failure? growth? motive? character? why love?—only when considered as a probation. Spiritual force persists. Only by a future life can the universe become a harmony.

> "Truly there needs another life to come!
> If this be all (I must tell Festus that)
> And other life awaits us not—for me
> I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
> A wretched failure; I for one protest
> Against it—and I hurl it back with scorn."
>
> *Paracelsus.*

[1] A note from Dante written by Browning in his wife's Testament.

Browning believes in immortality because of the demands of reason. On the other hand, we may agree with Mrs. Orr, that "his challenge to Faith and Hope imposes itself far less through any intellectual plea which he may advance in his support than through the unconscious testimony of all creative genius to the marvel of conscious life."

Whitman, confident in his inspiration and truer to his art (which is a result and not a process) simply affirms, without argument, though the same intellectual appeal is present.

"I do not think Life provides for all and for Time and Space, but I believe heavenly death provides for all."

Songs of Parting.

"Is it a dream?
Nay, but the lack of it the dream,
And failing it, life's lore and wealth a dream,
And all the world a dream!"

Birds of Passage.

"The untold want by life and land ne'er granted,
Now, voyager, sail thou forth to seek and find."

Songs of Parting.

"It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is Happiness."

Song of Myself.

However, for Whitman, the final assurance is given by Nature.

"Ah, the dead to me mar not, they fit well in Nature,
They fit very well in the landscape under the trees and grass,
And along the edge of the sky in the horizon's far margin."

Autumn Rivulets.

"The smallest sprout shows there is really no death."

Song of Myself.

It is the sea, that, creeping to his feet, whispers the word, "final, superior to all"; the grey brown thrush in the cedar swamp carols a welcome to the "dark mother." In the moose, the cat, the chickadee, the prairie dog—all animals, he sees the same old law of life and death. The pulsations of all matter and spirit throbbing forever prove that

"Death is but the beginning, and that nothing is or can be lost, nor ever die, nor soul nor matter."

Specimen Days.

For if one life be continuous, all life must be continuous.

"I swear I think now that everything without exception has an eternal soul!
The trees have, rooted in the ground! the weeds of the sea have! the animals!"

Proud Music of the Storm.

"And limitless are leaves, stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them."

Song of Myself.

To both poets old age is but the estuary that enlarges itself and opens broadly into the great sea.

"Old age, calm, expanded, broad, with the haughty breadth of the universe,
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of death."

Song of the Open Road.

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!'"

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

Whitman will sing the very loveliness of death: death was never sung so tenderly and joyously as in his two finest lyrics, *Out of the Cradle* and *Lincoln's Burial Hymn*, and in his last sweet farewell song:

"Thee, holiest minister of Heaven—thee, envoy, usherer, guide at last of all,
Rich, florid, loosener of the stricture-knot call'd life,
Sweet, peaceful, welcome Death."

Death's Valley.

Hitherto death has been for the most part a sombre figure in literature, charactered throughout the Middle Ages as a grim musician, leading all men upon his dance, the dance Macaber. Prince Henry, in Longfellow's *Golden Legend*, shudders at the paintings in the gallery.

Prince Henry :—"Let us go forward, and no longer stay
In this great picture-gallery of Death!
I hate it! ay, the very thought of it!"

Elsie :—"Why is it hateful to you?"

Prince Henry :—"For the reason
That life, and all that speaks of life, is lovely
And Death, and all that speaks of Death, is hateful."

So might have answered the poets of many former generations. For the men of the age of Elizabeth, the grave was a vast charnel-house which could not be contemplated without a shudder and a fear. In our own century, William Morris, like the mariners of his *Earthly Paradise*, has done all in his power to escape its thought, which chills all he enjoys. Tennyson rises only to the hope that good may fall at last far off to all. For Whitman there is no death, there is no "other" life. In the midst of the valley he sees God's beautiful, eternal, right hand. "Joy!" he calls to his shipmate, "Joy!"

There are the same joyful tones in Browning's thoughts on death.

"Easter Day breaks, Christ rises, Mercy every way is infinite."

Very characteristic is the song at the end of parleying with Gerard de Lairesse. The old poet could join hands with a young lover, singing,—

"Daisies and grass be my heart's bed-fellows
On the mound wind spares and sunshine mellows;
Dance you, reds, and whites, and yellows!"

"Love is all," he concludes, "and death is nought."

The character of the future life they cannot know —they are satisfied that it is something good.

"I know it not, O soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land."

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

"They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where they go,
But I know that they go toward the best—toward something great."

Song of the Open Road.

In *This Compost*, and in one passage in *Song of Myself*, Whitman suggests an immortality of the dust; he bequeaths himself to grow from the grass he loves, and, if you were to protest that the earth is a poor immortality, he would question with the child, "What is grass?"

"How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he."

Song of Myself.

But in the end he asserts for the spirit a separate existence.

It is pathetic to see, once or twice, how the poets'

faith falters. Amid the sorrows of the world, oppressions, and shame, "the meanness and agony without end," it is not to be wondered at that there comes to Whitman the terrible doubt of appearances, that

"The may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only."

Calamus.

Even in the strong, beautiful *Prayer of Columbus* there is a pathetic questioning. Doubt comes to Browning also in the midst of triumph.

"Sudden turns the blood to ice: a chill wind disencharms
All the late enchantment! What if all be error."

Epilogue: Ferishtahs Fancies.

But both return from the doubt with a surer faith in the present. In the dialogue between Fancy and Reason, Browning pleads that uncertainty as to the soul's future is needful lest the soul, abandoning its struggles upon earth, fail of its probation. After all,—

"You must mix some uncertainty
With faith if you would have faith be."

Easter Day.

God, whom I praise; how could I praise,
If such as I might understand,
Make out and reckon on his ways,
And bargain for his love, and stand,
Paying a price, at his right hand?"

Agricola in Meditation.

Whitman's doubts are solved at once by the grasp of his lovers' hands, by companionship with dear friends.

"I cannot answer the question of appearances, or that of identity beyond the grave,
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me."
Calamus.

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§ 5.—LOVE OR THE SOCIAL SIDE OF LIFE.

(ARTISTIC METHOD.)

The last line quoted leads directly to the consideration of Whitman's second great thought on Life. While singing One's-self he utters the word democratic, ministering at once to the individual and to society, to the self and to the love which annihilates mere selfishness. In a complete world society is as necessary as the individual. By himself the one is but a potentiality. In community, in action and interaction, the individual becomes real and progressive. But given a number of self-governing people, how can a nationality be compacted?

"Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?
Or by an agreement on a paper? Or by arms?
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.'
Drum-Taps.

How but by a spiritual principle which will draw men together in proportion as external bonds are relaxed. The recognition of love, as such a unifying principle, is comparatively modern, and the complete

history of its working has yet to be written. Professor Henry Jones, treating of the theme of love, has finely said: "Love, which in its earliest form, seems to be the natural yearning of brute for brute, appearing and disappearing at the suggestion of physical needs, passes into an idealised sentiment, into an emotion of the soul, into a principle of moral activity, which manifests itself in a permanent overflow of helpful deeds for man. It represents, when thus sublimated, *one side, at least, of the expansion of the self, which culminates when the world beats in the pulse of the individual, and the joys and sorrows, the defeats and victories of mankind are felt by him as his own.* It is no longer dependent merely on the incitement of youth, grace, beauty, whether of body or character; it transcends all limitations of sex and age, and finds objects on which it can spend itself in all that God has made, even in that which has violated its own law of life and become mean and pitiful. It becomes a love of fallen humanity, and an ardour to save it by becoming the conscious and permanent motive of all men. The history of this evolution of love has been written by the poets. Every phase through which this ever-deepening emotion has passed, every form which this primary power has taken in its growth, has received from them its own proper expression. They have made even the grosser instincts lyric with beauty; and, ascending with their theme, they have sung the pure passion of soul for soul, its charm and its strength, its idealism and heroism, up to the point at which,

in Browning, it transcends the limits of finite existence, sheds all its earthly vesture, and becomes a spiritual principle of religious aspiration and self-surrender to God." [1]

As a spiritual principle love has never been sung with such poetic insight as by Browning. With Whitman love is less a principle than a practice—if the distinction be allowable—and his confidence springs not so much from his philosophy as from his observation that love has lain latent in all men, therefore beneath metaphysics, beneath Socrates as beneath Christ. His songs are of personal love between comrades, with the intent, however, of national compactment. He calls to human brotherhood with clear and penetrating voice, saying with Christ in Palestine, "All ye are brethren." Like Christ he is a direct, personal, emotional force, probably the strongest in this century.

"Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the tenderest lover,
Who was not proud of his songs but of the measureless ocean of love within him, and freely pour'd it forth."

Calamus.

The critical period of Whitman's life was the Civil War, during which he served in the hospitals. The war purified his nature, rendered him sympathetic as a mother and filled his mind with emotive thought. From the war emerging, he sings of comradeship and

[1] *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, p. 158-9.

democracy. He has no doubt now as to the meaning of popular government. Democracy, as he understands it, is not wholly a question of institutions. He would agree with Carlyle that men are not free because possessed of a vote and one ten-thousandth part in a "House of Palaver." Liberty is not derived from a State legislature. Institutions are extraneous, the mere clothing of the body, and clothing, as Mr. Clemens suggests in his study of King Arthur's Court, may wear out and become ragged. "To be loyal to rags, to shout for rags, to worship rags, to die for rags—that is a loyalty of unreason, it is pure animal; it belongs to monarchy, was invented by monarchy; let monarchy keep it."

"But really I am neither for nor against institutions.
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city
of these States, inland and sea-board,
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel,
little or large, that dents the water,
Without edifices, or rules, or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades."

Calamus.

Upon no other basis than love can democracy be reared. Selfishness is separation, death, and decay.

"And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy, walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud."

Song of Myself.

In the evolution of nations, as of individuals, only the fittest, the most helpful survives. May we not

say that the English race occupies the forefront of civilisation because taking most heed of the law of brotherhood. Brotherhood becomes really a question of national survival.

"Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems of freedom yet."

Drum-Taps.

"I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,
By the love of comrades,
By the manly love of comrades."

Calamus.

"I dream'd in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth,
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends."

Calamus.

A beautiful vision, as true as beautiful, and one which the world will not willingly let die.

The emotional is the key to Whitman's artistic method. If he err, it is on the side of love. Caring for the wounded soldiers in war time, he bore deep in his breast "a burning flame." Afterwards he could write,—

"Beauty, knowledge inure not to me—yet there are two or three things inure to me:
I have nourished the wounded and soothed many a dying soldier,
And at intervals, waiting in the midst of camp, composed these songs."

Drum-Taps.

Whitman's method, let me repeat, is not derived

from formal art, but from life itself. It may be a novel thing in literary criticism to scrutinise a civil war for the genesis of poetic forms, but Whitman demands novelty of view or he will not be understood.

" Arm'd year [1861], year of the struggle,
No dainty rhymes or sentimental love verses for you, terrible year,
Not you as some pale poetling seated at a desk lisping cadenzas piano,
But as a strong man erect, clothed in blue clothes, advancing, carrying a rifle on your shoulder."

Drum-Taps.

To a certain civilian he answered,—

" I have been born of the same as the war was born. . . .
And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and with piano tunes,
For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me."

Drum-Taps.

Till the war, he was seeking the law of his poems. His best work, more pure, refined, was subsequent to it.

With respect to literature, Whitman is related in method not so directly to Browning as to Richard Wagner, with whom, however, both poets have often the closest affinity. Let it not be thought strange that such relationship is possible. The habitual attitude of the northern Teutonic mind is much the same under whatever skies or whatever conditions. Wagner and Browning are more conscious products of an old culture and civilisation. Whitman is a more unconscious artist of not altogether dissimilar thought-

tendencies in a freer world. It will be well to indicate what we understand to be Wagner's place in the republic of art. While a legitimate successor of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schumann, in that he has extended the province of music, Wagner is yet primarily a poet, only secondarily a musician. He is related rather—taking into account difference of time and conditions—to the Greek tragedy-writers who were not only writers of plays, but also composers of the music and lyric rhythms which were an essential accompaniment. And, as with the plays of Æschylus, who of all the Greeks best observed the function of poet-composer, the final appeal is to the student of literature. Wagner has himself indicated that this is the point of view from which he wished his works to be contemplated. "I write no more operas," he said in 1851, "and as I can invent no arbitrary name for my works, I call them *dramas*, because by my doing so, I at least most clearly define the standpoint whence what I offer must be accepted." It seems a little strange that to this day the majority of his critics persist in judging him as a musical performer. Even the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden announced the Niblung cycle among its "German Opera," and literary journals have discussed their performance in the columns devoted to music. But Wagner is so much more than a musician, his numerous prose writings and published letters are so replete with wisdom, gathered by the truest insight, upon many subjects—art, philosophy, religion, politics—all human subjects of world-wide significance—that it is folly to

neglect the more comprehensive view. "Now if you wish to start a paper," Wagner wrote to Uhlig, "I beg you to get rid of all that smells of 'musical paper': always conceive the undertaking from a general standpoint, art and life; and truly, according to their core and essence, not according to their husk." Now Wagner is first and foremost a dramatist, and deals in his artistic works with thought, and character, and situation. It will be remembered that his first ambition was to be a poet. As a school-boy he worked for years upon a tragedy, more terrible than Hamlet and Lear, in which his forty-two characters perished. And to supply a musical setting to his drama, he began the study of music, borrowing Lozier's *Thorough-bass Method* for his purpose. In all his dramas the poetry was written first. And it will be found that the thought conveyed by his music is poetic, not strictly musical.

The thought-soul of a sonata is musical; it has its own laws, and own manner and medium of expression. When Mendelssohn was asked what was the meaning of his *Songs without Words*, he replied that they meant what they said. Musical thought is untranslatable: it appeals directly to the emotional nature and to the imagination.

Wagner's compositions are not so. In his art are embedded a philosophy of life, an interpretation of history, almost a theology. Every drama has its purpose, and contains, even in the structure of the musical phrases, a criticism of life. And it is the triumph of his art that, starting from ideal truth, he has succeeded

in giving such truth concrete expression in the action of characters who are as clearly and skilfully drawn as are those of Shakespeare. To his philosophy, though it is never obtrusive, and to the characters who are its mouthpieces, the song and orchestral accompaniments are subsidiary and explanatory. The instrumentation becomes very near articulation. Wagner has simply constructed a language of musical sounds which, with the word-sounds, body forth the emotional and rational element which is below all language whatsoever. His music is speech, not merely song. In a few instances the orchestra assumes the function of an actor, as in Siegfried's Death-March, where the orchestral harmonies make an independent proclamation of heroic grief (with all the joyful notes, by the way, of Whitman's songs of Death) in a manner impossible to any other instrument in the drama. The orchestra again has a prophetical function, as when, in *Das Rheingold*, Wotan tarries a moment in thought upon the rainbow-bridge, there is heard the prophecy of the sword which, long after, is destined, in the hand of Siegfried, to shatter the spear of power and restore a divided world. In no case, however, is the music absolute, but always subsidiary to dramatic harmony. Someone at my elbow suggests that Schumann is more akin to Browning than Wagner. But the suggestion contains the confusion of identifying music and poetry, which I have tried to avoid. It is idle to seek to make Wagner's dramas conform to the laws of a music to which they were never intended to conform. The whole force of the comparison with Whitman relies upon the distinc-

tion. You may think Wagner's system to be in error —that is another matter.

With the thought-content of Wagner's dramas, we have not here to do. But as a justification of the juxtaposition of the names of Wagner, Browning, and Whitman, I cannot forbear quoting a single passage from a letter of Wagner to Uhlig, which illustrates the Teutonic principle of liberty held in common by the three:

> "I will be happy, and a man can only be that if he is free; but that man is free who is what he can, and, therefore, must be. Whoever, therefore, satisfies the inner necessity of his being, is free; because he feels himself one with himself, because everything which he does answers to his nature, to his true needs. *Whoever follows a necessity, not from within, but from without, is subject to compulsion; he is not free, but an unfortunate slave.* The free man laughs at oppression from without, if only inner necessity be not sacrificed to it; it can only cause fly stings, not heart wounds. I don't care what happens to me, if only I become what, according to my nature, I ought to become. So shall I be right even if no idler take notice of me." *Letters.*[1]

In the manner of expression we are confronted by a new problem, and the three artists are alike in this, also a peculiarly Teutonic trait, in departure from accepted conventions of form—"sow song sedition."

In *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* there is a sug-

[1] Translated by Hueffler.

gestive symbolism of the antagonism between the formalism of art and its freedom, the reconciliation of which Wagner, Whitman, and Browning may be said to have striven for. The creative principle is associated in the play with the enthusiasm of love, with the poet-knight Walter, who unmindful of the pedantic code which governed the composition of master-songs, gives free expression, joyful, birdlike, to the native poetic impulses of his heart; but he fails thereby of the prize. The regulative principle is associated with age and moderation, with the guild who thinks songs can be made as shoes on a last, with Beckmesser who "marks" and sings by rule, who is also "outdone and outsung." Finally, Hans Sachs, cobbler and poet—Richard Wagner himself, Browning, Whitman, any good craftsman—sides both with Walter and the guild, recognising the power of the one and the need of the other, adapts form to spirit, sacrificing something of each to make the union possible, and by Sachs' help Walter wins his bride and medal. And Hans warns his fellow-workers,—

> "One way you measure solely
> A work your rules do not fit;
> Resign your own views wholly,
> Some other rules apply to it."

Wagner's music dramas have two supreme characteristics. The first is their deep emotional element. His subjects were chosen that he might appeal to the feelings; their intellectual qualities but strengthen the emotional. It is for this reason that he chose the

medium of music, in addition to language, to convey the burden of emotional thought.

"Such led to thee, O soul,
All senses, shows and objects lead to thee,
But now, it seems to me, sound leads o'er all the rest."
WHITMAN: *Music of the Storm.*

"Consider it well; each tone of our scale in itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought:
And there! ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!"
BROWNING: *Abt Vogler.*

Complete examples of emotional art are the love-dramas of *Tristan and Isolde*, the heroic *Ring des Nibelungen*, and *Parsifal*, the last of which is, perhaps, the highest expression of art in its supreme religious form we have yet attained to. Through the senses Wagner reaches the soul.

The second characteristic, with reference to form, is harmony of content and expression. The tendency of Wagner's method is to seek artistic effect in underlying harmonies of thought and tonality. The music springs from the words, and the words from the music —"the verse being as the mood it paints" (cf. *Pauline*). "Unless the subject absorbs me completely," Wagner wrote to his friend Uhlig, "I cannot produce twenty bars worth listening to." And again he writes: "The

musical phrases fit themselves on to the verses and periods without any trouble on my part; everything grows as if wild from the ground." The orchestra is, therefore, no mere accompaniment, but an essential expression of the thought and action. "Every bar of the music," the author explained to Liszt, "is justified only by the fact that it explains something in the action or in the character of the actor." In a letter to Uhlig, he says:

> "Just at the beginning of the second scene of this act—when Elsa steps on to the balcony—it struck me how in the prelude for wind instruments, the 7th, 8th, and 9th bars where Elsa appears by night, a theme is heard for the first time, which, later on, when Elsa advances towards the church, in bright daylight and full splendour, is presented in complete development broad and bright. Thereupon it became evident to me that my themes always originate coherently and with the character of *plastic phenomena*."
>
> *Letters.*

In other words, renouncing the artificial symmetry of beat and measure he endeavours to correlate physical and psychical phenomena. The word which best describes the beauty of the Wagnerian drama, as indeed the beauty of Nature and of highest art, is *characteristic*, that which belongs to the idea, and is of it, a beauty which may include even discord and harshness as essential elements.

Beauty, can we agree? has no objective existence.

The great art of the world is beautiful because it first has power.

> "The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of material laws, and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs and roses on a bush . . . and the fluency and ornaments of the finest poems are not independent but dependent."

This is Whitman's dictum; and it is interesting to compare the words of Blake in his preface to the *Jerusalem*, where its form is characterised as follows:

> "Every word and every letter is studied and put into its place. The terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts, the mild and gentle for the mild and gentle parts, and the prosaic for the inferior parts; all are necessary to each other."

In literature, the lyrical forms proper for song have been found inadequate for our century's burden of emotive thought. And as in music, the tendency has been to advance from Italian song and melody to those complete orchestral harmonies which Wagner describes as the invention of the Christian spirit, so in literature the poets have passed from the lyric to a grander, more harmonious epic structure, midway between speech and song, wherein both thought and passion find their common home.

Whitman's method is seen at its best—it is fair to take a man at his best, to measure him, not by his

shortcomings, but as Browning would estimate him, by his highest faculty and attainment—in the threnody on the burial of Lincoln, a song which is, as Swinburne notes, "the most sonorous nocturne ever chanted in the church of the world." It is a master-song in thought, in phrase, and in movement, and needs no defence to any real tone-artist. The chief characteristic is its emotional quality. Love, uniting with Nature's lyrical mourners, chants of death in strains of passionate music, death's outlet song of life, and the whole emotional and rational being can but respond to its glowing human appeal. The second characteristic is harmony of line and rhythm to the thought and motive. Motive, metre, and tone-quality are presented in a predestined unity. The chant form lends itself to emotional utterance, and has always been so employed by Hebrew psalmists and Celtic bards. The chant removes to the farthest the limits of time, must be read as a whole in pulses and tones, appeals to the synthetic rather than analytic perception. The verse form of the hymn interprets the emotion with rare felicity of phrase and tonality. The prelude is as perfect, in its own way, as that to *Lohengrin;* it announces the subject, and strikes the recurring chords of the lilac and the star, and "thought of him I love." By a cluster of powerful spondaic lines the dominant passion is stirred to the depths. Then follow pictures of life and Nature, the lines branching with the thought; till the poet, rapt by the charm of the bird's carol, the voice of his spirit tallying the song of the bird, rises to a height of lyrical ecstasy.

"Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide,
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O death."

The chord of feeling is completed by a correspondence of the last thoughts with the first. The effect of the whole is that produced by solemn music. One is left staring at the page, quite oblivious to time or space, like one listening to far off anthems. The intellectual plays hardly no part in perception. Imagination and passion, the complete synthetic being, are permitted unhindered movement, so completely has harmony, flowing and volatile, taken the place of metrical melody. Not less characteristic are the war lyrics, though Whitman never attained an equal perfection of poetic expression. However, as a whole, Whitman's writings are not to be viewed as a mere artistic performance.

Browning is apparently less emotional than Whitman. Prof. Sharp, in his biography, speaks of Browning's "fatal excess of cold over emotive thought." But to this opinion I venture to demur. It would be true if said of Wordsworth, but it is seldom true of Browning; the former is meditative, the latter is the reverse. "Cold," rational processes are indeed often present, but that they are "fatal" is not certain, for we have to deal to-day with an art which is all inclusive. Our creed declares Browning—in the words of *The Book of the Poets* said of Shakespeare—"most

passionate and most rational — of an emotion which casts us into thought, of a reason which leaves us open to emotion." Both emotional nature and emotional expression have altered somewhat since the days of Minnesingers. Agreeing as to the emotional quality of Wagner's and Whitman's art, it is within reason to say that they are as profound thinkers as Browning.

It is a matter difficult to argue, for the appeal is to the personality; and from this standpoint, for myself, the emotive element in Browning's poems is their most characteristic quality.

Impulse predominated in the poet's nature (cf. Mrs. Orr's *Biog.* p. 388). He was a lover of music, the most emotional of the arts, and for the mystic an echo of the eternal life—"music which leads us," said Carlyle, "to the verge of the infinite."

The processes of his thought are more often passionate and intuitive than strictly logical. Intensity and concentration or fusion are the way of the passions, not of the intellect. Premising love as the supreme living principle, Browning reasons in the manner of a mystic from the whole to the parts. If he fail artistically it is in attempting to justify his emotional, spiritual experiences to his conscious philosophy. To do this he must descend from the heaven of his art, as he does even in *One Word More*, to analyse and define. But, on the other hand, his very analyses are those of a man full of emotion, and a vital imagination rescues at the last even his later philosophic poems from mere temporality.

"Love proceeding Power, and with much Power always much more Love."

Paracelsus.

Professor Jones says upon this point, quoting from his preface:

"In some of these poems we might even seem to be receiving a philosophical lesson, in place of a poetical inspiration, if it were not for those powerful imaginative utterances, those winged words, which Browning has always in reserve, to close the ranks of his argument. If the question be stated in a prosaic form, the final answer, as in the ancient oracle, is in the poetic language of the gods."

The obscurity of his poems, when not obscurity as to facts, is more often emotional than intellectual, for emotions, far more often than thoughts, lie too deep for words. Such, for instance, is the "obscurity" of *O Lyric Love*, which demands an inner spiritual adjustment of phrase to phrase rather than grammatical—a synthetic not analytic vision; the poem is plain to a lover. The dashes scattered abundantly in his pages (cf. *Ixion*, etc.) often indicate the spiritual atmosphere in which the thoughts float free, like sea-weed in the waves.

His method, again, is like that of Wagner, inner, emotional, having to do not with logical, but with psychical consistency. The monologue, his own characteristic creation, adapts itself to the expression of moods and impulses. Mr. Fox, reviewing *Pauline* in 1833, accepted its peculiar confessional quality as indicative of the highest emotional life in the writer.

Only a highly passionate nature, with its power of fusion, can be successful with the psychical method.

At the worst, poetry and philosophy are near akin, and it becomes a question of moment whether Browning, in appealing to philosophy, has really stepped upon alien ground. For the mystic, poetry and philosophy alike are "a reasoning of things together." They seek the same truth and the same kind of truth, philosophy proving what poetry assumes, the unity of the universe. Both to use Shelley's phrase, "participate in the eternal, the infinite, and the one," and Browning is surely not the only thinker among artists. Perhaps never before in the world's history have serious thoughts taken such possession of first-rate art. The real antithesis of art is not to philosophy but to science.

The whole effect of any given poem is, moreover, to arouse never the thought alone, but the whole personality. This is the real point at issue. And Browning is almost unique in the manner in which he adjusts the entire nature of the reader to see and know the truth. He makes vital the imagination, quickens the emotions, and sets flowing within us mingled streams of thought and will-impulse. "The words of true poems give you more than poems." "Only the poet begets." Like Luria to the Florentines, Browning brings

> "Fresh stuff
> For us to mould, interpret and prove right,
> New feeling fresh from God."

Thought? "Nay sirs," said Caponsacchi, "what shall follow was not thought."

"I have thought sometimes, and thought long and hard,
I have stood before, gone round a serious thing,
Tasked my whole mind to touch and clasp it close,
As I stretch forth my arm to touch this bar.
God and man, and what duty I owe both,—
I dare say I have confronted these
In thought: but no such faculty helped here.
I put forth no thought,—powerless all that night
I paced the city: it was the first spring.
By the invasion I lay passive to,
In rushed new things, the old were rapt away."
Ring and the Book, vi., 937-48.

There can be, at least, but one opinion as to his teaching. His highest theme is love, his song a burden of love. Browning, if ever poet did, called the harp back to the heart. It was in his old age, when, so some critics assert, the cold philosophic habit of thinking had quenched the fire of his poetic passion! that he penned one of the sweetest love songs in literature, *Summum Bonum*. No one has more strongly asserted the superiority of love over knowledge. "For we know in part and we prophesy in part." His theory of life and society is passionate, not scientific.

"Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity."

His interest is with the salvation of men, his sympathies with the failures and unheroic. Love for him

is the greatest thing in the world; and Professor Drummond, in treating of the great theme of St. Paul, quotes centrally, after the 13th chapter of *Corinthians*, a few lines from Browning's *Death in the Desert.*

> "*For life with all it yields of joy, and woe,*
> *And hope, and fear,*
> *Is just our chance of the prize of learning love,—*
> *How love might be, hath been indeed and is.*"

Browning is a more skilful artist than Whitman. The adjustment between the new and the old (the creative and the regulative principles), on which the success of poetry as a minister of life depends, is far more perfect. The English heroic is capable of indefinite expansion. Thought, in Pope's couplet, is a spirit imprisoned in its own expression. But Browning, retaining something of the form, liberates the genius, permitting it to escape from line to line with a glad sense of freedom. His verses will not always scan; the form of *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* and of other poems approaches the freedom of prose. Applying the canon of correlation of form and spirit, Browning is seen to be an artist of the rarest technic — how perfect we have hardly yet begun to appreciate, so taken up have we been hitherto by discussions of his philosophy of life. Already in *Pauline* his active will was shaping the form to his purpose.

> "So I will sing on fast as fancies come,
> Rudely, the verse being as the mood it paints."

And in the first preface to *Paracelsus* he insisted that his work should be judged by the laws of its own production—aiming at effect, power, careless of mere beauty as the stars about numbers. He would trust the spirit, as sovran nature does, to make the form "inward evermore to outward." The whole question of Browning's artistic forms awaits an investigator; it will depend upon what we mean by form, and whether form be an end or means of power. That grotesqueness which Mr. Bagehot finds so repulsive in *Caliban upon Setebos* may be found to be its *characteristic* beauty. What more perfect example of adaptation of rime, metre, word, and tone to the informing thought than *The Flight of the Duchess* or *Fra Lippo Lippi;* or the twilight passage in *Andrea del Sarto* where the youth, hope, and art of the painter are toned down to sober Fiesole, line and tone and movement contributing their effect.

Or under what possible formal canon of art can this conversation of Ottima be placed, where the scene alone informs the words:

"Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights perhaps;
But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
We call such light the morning; let us see!
Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall
Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course,
The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is't full morning?
Oh, don't speak then!"

Will not some psychologist, skilled not in the "Science of Rhyme," but in the art of soul-expression,[1] interpret Browning for us?

One quality common to Browning, Wagner, and Whitman, which I may be permitted to make mention of in passing, is the consonantal rather than vocalic tonality of their song. Wagner sought to create a harmony of consonantal sounds. He chose, therefore, alliteration or consonantal rime for his verse, quite indifferent to the vowels. The body of the tone is thus heavier and seemingly harsh. The lighter, more tuneful *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* are capable of translation into Italian song, but the heroic *Ring* would lose in every way if sung in any other language than its native German. In the same way Browning gains strength by the use of consonants, which are as marked a characteristic of the English as the German speech. Alliteration is never mechanical with him, but psychic. In the following lines the consonants form the body of sound:

"Thunders on thunders, doubling and redoubling
Doom o'er the mountain, while a sharp white fire
Now shone, now sheared its rusty herbage, troubling
Hardly the fir-boles, now discharging its ire
Full where some pine-trees solitary spire
Crashed down, defiant to the last."

Gerard de Lairesse.

As an illustration again of psychic sound-harmonies, I think one may study to advantage the liquid flow of the bird's song in Whitman's *Out of the Cradle.*

[1] Cf. *History of Æsthetic*, Bosanquet, 1892: chap. XV. and App. II.

" Shake out carols !
Solitary here the night's carols !
Carols of lonesome love ! death's carols !
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon !
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea !
O reckless, despairing carols."

A comparison with Poe's poems, which are so often purely mechanical in their construction, would serve as a contrast. The preference for consonantal tonality arises no doubt from the peculiar Teutonic and northern temperament, which despises the mere elegancies of singers and rimers of the southern races, which, devoid of truth, can but be conceived by a less imaginative race as mere "lascivious pleasings," heaviness and strength of harmonies being preferred to lightness and sweetness of melodies. The modern study of phonology may help us to appreciate the emotional beauty of consonantal effects which now seem harsh to our vocalic ears. Perhaps the day of *lautlehre* is coming.

Browning, Wagner, and Whitman have been introduced in this study as indicating the new spirit in art, whose operation has resulted in what some schools of critics lament as destruction of form. But form has not been destroyed. That is an impossibility in any art whatsoever. The whole secret is that new wine has been poured into new bottles. The distinction between the old and the new is not between the formal and the formless, but between different forms. Art has changed in recognition of the needs of

emotional thought. A more plastic, extensive medium, half-song, half-speech, has been employed which responds more readily to the passionate beat of the heart.

Love has of late greatly increased among men. It is indicated everywhere by a growing sense of comradeship, and interdependence, and organic union. In a democracy the emotional must ever be the solvent, the unifying force; for the intellectual too often divides men. Despotism may govern without love, but liberty cannot.

The work of fusion is assigned by Whitman to the poet, arguing that poetry, in its entirety, is the dominant moral factor of progress.

> "I listened to the Phantom by Ontario's shore,
> I heard the voice arising demanding bards:
> By them all native and grand, by them alone can these States be fused into the compact organism of a nation."
>
> *By Blue Ontario's Shore.*

Looking to England, Whitman questions: "Is there one that is consistent with these United States or essentially applicable to them as they are and are to be? Is there one whose underlying basis is not a denial and insult to democracy?"

I cannot follow Whitman here in the spirit of unreasoning discipleship. Browning's message to democracy, though with a wide difference in manner of statement, is yet singularly like that of Whitman in its essential purpose. To strike the sum of the

foregoing estimate, Browning and Whitman are alike in the stress laid upon the value and dignity of personality, man or woman, each of whom is created different for a purpose, given his own centre and own government, equal with respect to destiny. They are alike in regarding the soul as the end of the evolution of Nature, which is higher, therefore, than animals and trees, and appointed to progress beyond them to the goal of Infinite Spirit. They are alike in recognising, not scorning, the uses of the body and the world in which the body must exist, and alike in their faith in the present and their hope in the future. So far their message is for the sake of individuality. They are alike, to continue, in their word, high over all, of love, which is the greatest good and the supreme principle in the world; both are willing, therefore, to give emotions, not the intellect alone, way in shaping their verse—this word they have given for the sake of unity. Thus the poets join hands in linking literature with life, for this, I submit, is the very creed of emancipation and democracy.

Nor can democracy be unmindful of the earlier poets, who never ceased to hold up the light and song of English freedom. Was not Chaucer out on the "open road," journeying in bond of fellowship with other pilgrims to Becket's shrine!—the shrine is passed, but the road goes on. Thinking, too, of Milton and Burns, and especially of Shelley, whom we celebrate, whose love of freedom and "passion for reforming the world" no man has exceeded, and now of William Morris, our later prophet, whose hope for

art and labour contains the prophecy of the golden day that is to be, I am inclined to quote for them all the lines of Whittier on the Child's Memorial Window to Milton in St. Margaret's Church at Westminster :

"The New World honours him whose lofty plea
For England's freedom made her own more sure,
Whose song immortal as the theme shall be
Their common freehold while both worlds endure."

The New World?—"How little the New after all," Whitman said, "how much the Old, Old World."

THE END.

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